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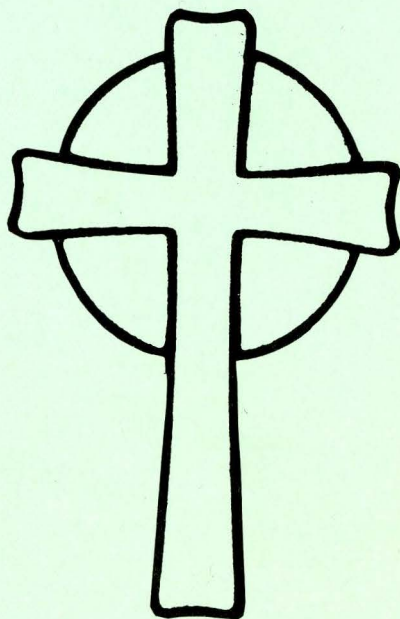
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CIRCULATION MANAGER
Carolyn Thompson

THE HIGH CHURCH ROOTS OF JOHN WESLEY'S APPEAL TO PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

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Within Protestantism appeals to the ancient church for ecclesiastical life and doctrine have a long history.¹ Early in the era of the Reformation Zwingli, the Anabaptists, Bullinger, Bucer, and Calvin were looking to the NT to restore the primitive Christian faith, taking antiquity as their standard against the aberrations they were convinced lived in the church of their day.² Even prior to this, the Paulicians, Bogomils, Waldenses, Lollards, the Unity of the Brethren, and the Christian humanists had attempted their own versions of restoring the ancient church. John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Erasmus, and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples were all attempting in their respective eras and locales to initiate reform using more or less the ancient precepts and practices of the early church. Their perceptions of primitive Christianity, ascertained from the Scriptures, acted in each case as a foundational standard for reform.³

Impulses toward restoring the ancient church and seeking a standard for faith and practice in primitive Christianity were notably present in England

¹ The expressions "ancient church," "primitive Christian faith," "primitive church," "primitive Christianity" are typically used by restorationists to refer to the characteristics of the historic church in its various settings as described in the NT. However, there was in the High Church Anglicanism of Wesley's day an extension of the definition of "primitive Christianity" to include the church of antiquity up through the fourth century. Both uses represent appeals to primitive Christianity as a perceived "golden age" of the church, an early time when the church was free from the human accretions which distorted in various ways its doctrine and practice. For Wesley primitive Christianity typically includes the NT era through the third century, although Wesley saw the pre-Constantinian church as progressively moving further from its pristine purity. See Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991) 46-53, 108-112.

² See Paul D. L. Avis, "'The True Church' in Reformation Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30 (1977):319-45; also see C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots* (Abilene, TX: ACU, 1988) 21-34.

³ See Monroe Hawley, *The Focus of Our Faith* (Nashville: 20th Century Christian, 1985) 29-66 for a description of these groups as restorationists. Cf. Abraham Friesen, "The Impulse Toward Restitutionist Thought in Christian Humanism," *JAAR* 44 (March 1976):29-45; C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Illusions of Innocence: Primitivism in America, 1630-1875*, with a Foreword by Robert N. Bellah (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 7-9; Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, 11-20.

during and shortly following the Reformation.⁴ During the reign of Edward VI, Protestant influence, especially from Reformed sources, infiltrated the Church of England through Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, Martin Bucer, et al., and it is proper to see these precursors of the Elizabethan Settlement as, in a sense, a first wave of English primitivistic concern. Primitivism, then, cannot be entirely separated from the roots of the established Church of England, despite Anglican tendencies to accentuate its links with Catholic traditionalism, and despite a penchant on the part of historians to link English appeals to primitive Christianity with the later and better defined Puritan movement.⁵ Certainly primitivism was a cardinal constituent of Puritanism, but an interest toward following primitive precedents can also be traced in the Elizabethan Settlement and later Anglicanism. In fact, even though a call for primitive Christianity is typically associated with Puritan reform, there still existed, following the restoration of the Stuarts to the throne in 1660 (in the person of Charles II), and following the Act of Conformity in 1662, a considerable concern on the part of many High Church Anglicans for the Christianity of antiquity.⁶

A concern for primitive Christianity was also present among the earliest Methodists in eighteenth-century England, and this was particularly so of John Wesley himself. However, because Puritanism's primitivistic stance was already well established and well known in Wesley's day, and because Methodism for so long stayed closely united to the Church of England, Wesley's primitivism tends to be ignored vis à vis Puritanism's strong emphasis on ancient precedent. It is also tempting to view Methodist primitivism, when it is given its due, as stemming directly from Puritan influences. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine the foundations of the emphasis on primitive Christianity which was present among the early Wesleyan Methodists, particularly John Wesley. Wesley's primitivism will be examined in terms of its High Church Anglican background, with special reference to his contact with High Church primitivism, the Religious

⁴ Cf. W.P. Haugaard, "Renaissance Patristic Scholarship and Theology in Sixteenth-Century England," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 10 (1979):37-60.

⁵ Theodore Dwight Bozeman does a superb job of delineating the primitivistic theme in Puritanism, including its antecedents, in Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension of Puritanism* (Chapel Hill, NC: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Cf. Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, 35-48; Allen and Hughes, *Illusions of Innocence*, 7-14, 25-32.

⁶ See Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 9-21. Campbell divides High Church primitivists into conservatives and progressives, the conservatives being those wishing to defend, as is, the Anglicanism of their day, maintaining its doctrine, liturgy, and piety. Progressives he views as defending Anglicanism, but the Progressives were willing to promote alterations in contemporary liturgy and piety.

Societies movement, the religious predispositions of Wesley's own family, and the impact of primitivism on later changes in Wesley's thinking.

Wesley and Primitive Christianity

Students of John Wesley and Methodism have consistently identified Wesley's lifelong concern for primitive Christianity as one of the chief constituents of eighteenth-century evangelicalism.⁷ Wesley wanted to restore the nature and characteristics of the primitive church, including its teachings, practices, worship, and, to a lesser extent, its order. Martin Schmidt, one of the premier Wesleyan biographers, says,

To his mind, the pristine Christianity of the Apostles supplied man's every need. All his zeal was devoted to this. He was utterly convinced that primitive Christianity could be restored in his own day and age, and in every generation. . . . Restoration of the primitive Christian stance in its totality was always his guiding principle; never for a single moment did he diverge from this.⁸

Schmidt's opinion is supported in numerous examples from Wesley's letters, sermons, and even in the "Rules of the United Societies," although these are not typically as much overt references to the term "primitive Christianity" (Wesley typically referred to "real Christianity" or "Scriptural Christianity" when addressing the subject) as they are consistent appeals to Scripture and to ancient practice.⁹ One instance of Wesley's use of the expression "Primitive Church" is especially significant in that it was written in 1784, in the twilight of Wesley's life. It reveals that even near the end of his long life

⁷ Cf. Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth, 1970) 29, 32-33; Ted A. Campbell, *Wesley and Christian Antiquity*; Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1989) 90, 158, 175, 514, et al.; Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (trans. Norman P. Goldhawk, vol. I: *From 17th June 1703 Until 24th May 1738*; London: Epworth, 1962) 134, 222; Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (trans. Denis Inman, vol. II part II: *John Wesley's Life Mission*; London: Epworth, 1973) 191-92.

⁸ Schmidt, vol. II part II, 191-92.

⁹ See John Wesley, "Sermon XXII—Sermon on the Mount, VII," in *Wesley's Standard Sermons* (ed. Edward H. Sugden; 5th ed.; 2 vols.; London: Epworth, 1961) I. 452, 460. Wesley says, "But we find little mention made in the NT of any of these indifferent circumstances. Nor does it appear that any stress was laid upon them by the Christians of the purer ages. . . . *Much less did the Apostles, or the Christians contemporary with them, beat or tear their own flesh*" (p. 452; italics mine, KDC). See also John Wesley, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne," in *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872), vol. VIII: *Addresses, Essays, Letters*, 269-271; John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason," in *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872), vol. VIII: *Addresses, Essays, Letters*, 11. At the end of the "Rules of the United Societies" Wesley writes, "These are the General Rules of our societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice," p. 271. There is clearly a penchant within Wesley to establish the societies on primitivistic biblical foundations.

Wesley was still vitally concerned about practicing Christianity within the parameters of the ancient faith. This had become, with time, a preeminent factor—vis à vis Anglican ecclesiastical policy—in his determining of the course his Methodists should take:

As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are at full liberty simply to follow the *Scriptures and the Primitive Church*. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free [italics mine, KDC].¹⁰

The pragmatic effects of Wesley's primitivism are indicated in several places throughout his writings and correspondence in the descriptions he offers of the Wesleyan societies and his instructions regarding ecclesiastical practices and personal discipleship. This is seen, for instance, in his "Essay on the Stationary Fasts," in which he appeals to ancient precedent in defense of the fasts which became standard for the Oxford Holy Club and the later societies.¹¹ Years later in writing his spiritual biography Wesley would say, "The next spring [1732] I began observing the Wednesday and Friday Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient church, tasting no food till three in the afternoon."¹² Other examples are found in the journal entries for January 21, 1740; May 17, 1740; May 7, 1741; and February 17, 1744, in which Wesley applies the standards of primitive Christianity to the manner in which a Christian is to live.¹³ Further, Schmidt has drawn attention to the primitive foundations of the call to apostolic poverty in the Methodists' lay preaching ministry, of obedience to Wesley on the part of his preachers (as Timothy would be to Paul), and of the qualifications of lay preachers being judged in terms of their fruitfulness in ministry.¹⁴

¹⁰ John Wesley, "To 'Our Brethren in America,'" in *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 8 vols. (ed. John Telford, vol. VII: *March 23, 1780 to July 24, 1787*) 239.

¹¹ John Wesley, "Essay on the Stationary Fasts," the Appendix in Thomas Deacon, *A Compleat Collection of Devotions, both Publick and Private, taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England* (London, 1734) 73. Cf. Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth, 1970) 32.

¹² John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 8 vols. (ed. Nehemiah Curnock repr. vol. I: *14th October 1735 - 13th June 1738*; London: Epworth, 1931) 468.

¹³ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 8 vols. (ed. Nehemiah Curnock repr. vol. II: *14th June 1738 - 9th April 1742* (London: Epworth, 1938) 332-33, 347, 453; John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 8 vols. (ed. Nehemiah Curnock repr. vol. III: *16th April 1742 - 30th October 1751*; London: Epworth, 1938) 116-17. Cf. Schmidt vol. II part I, 190.

¹⁴ Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (trans. Norman P. Goldhawk, vol. II part I: *From 17th June 1703 Until 24th May 1738*; London: Epworth, 1966) 107, 125, 136.

A good example of Wesley's concern for primitive Christianity is also found in his brief excursion to Georgia in 1736-37. Here he could do evangelistic mission work in a context void of historical precedent and influences, save those of the earliest Christians. Schmidt says of the trip,

One way for Wesley to return to Primitive Christianity was for him to go to a pristine environment where there was no church. Mission to heathens with no background was viewed by him as parallel to the original church's circumstances.¹⁵

Finally, and perhaps more significant than Wesley's appeal to ancient precedent for the practical carrying out of Christian faith, is the Wesleyan acceptance and acknowledgement of justification by faith, together with its accompanying emphases on assurance, perfection, prayer, confession, and Bible study as the central items in Christian spirituality. These, along with the enthusiasms which from time to time reoccurred en masse (most notably in the 1760s), were perceived as part of a restoration of the Spirit's influence on believers in a manner after the apostolic era. Rack's judgment is telling:

Those in the eighteenth-century movement believed they were experiencing a renewal of the truth and life of primitive Christianity as in the apostolic age, and saw this doctrinally as a renewal of the salvation doctrines of the Reformation.¹⁶

Evangelicalism, as a whole, aimed to recover a form of "primitive Christianity," defined in terms of the NT—an apostolic Church with a strongly supernaturalist flavour and centering on the teaching of a version of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith.¹⁷

The presence and character of primitivism within Methodism having been elucidated, the task remains of discerning the foundations of Wesley's primitivistic leanings. While some have seen a direct connection between Wesley's primitivism and Puritanism, the following presents the case for grounding Methodism's penchant for the church of antiquity in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century primitivism of High Church Anglicanism.¹⁸

Primitivism in High Church Anglicanism

With the return of the Stuarts to power in 1660 there arose a pathetic religious and moral atmosphere. At once both great optimism and hope arose

¹⁵ Schmidt, vol. I, 132. Cf. "He saw in missionary activity the key to the original meaning of the gospel, the rebirth of primitive Christianity, the existential way towards his own salvation." *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 158.

¹⁷ Henry Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism," *JEH* 38 (1987):590.

¹⁸ For bibliography and a discussion of the relationship of Methodism to Puritanism see Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 175-76.

among Anglicans because of the restoration, and also great depravity and vice. Maximin Piette describes the period:

There was in evidence a frightful lowering of public and private morals everywhere. . . . Concord and union of minds, harmony of soul, religious piety, recollection, and spiritual interior life had completely disappeared. . . . Religion consisted of useless repetition of useless forms.¹⁹

The moral depravity and irreligion among those professing allegiance to Anglicanism in the late seventeenth century brought responses from different quarters. First came literary responses from William Cave,²⁰ William Reeves,²¹ Anthony Horneck,²² Nathaniel Marshall,²³ who were all High Church Anglicans writing to expose the laxness of the official church and to call the church's adherents to the primitive Christian character. These writers were fortunate in that Ussher, Pearson, Fell, and Bull had been pouring over patristic documents, dramatically enhancing the knowledge of patristics among Anglicans of the late sixteenth century.²⁴ Therefore, when they found it prudent to make moralistic appeals based on ancient precedent, resources were ready at hand. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, for example, was dependent on these patristic advancements and, more than anything else, he wished to promote moral purity and practical piety within Anglicanism. In doing so Cave closely examined the church during the first five centuries of Christianity, describing virtually every aspect of the church's life and implying in his call to primitive roots that the church of his own day had fallen. Cave and the others like him were widely read among their peers and during the next century, indicating the power and prevalence of their plea for the nation to reconsider, and conform their practice to, the teachings and practices of earliest Christianity.

Aside from the above literary contributions which called the church to practice the primitivistic faith, there existed among the High Church-oriented

¹⁹ Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1937) 181-82. Cf. Eamon Duffy, "Primitive Christianity Revived; Religious Renewal in Augustan England," in *Studies in Church History* 14 (1977):288.

²⁰ William Cave, *Primitive Christianity; or The Religion of the Ancient Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel* (London: 1673).

²¹ William Reeves, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr . . . with a Prefatory Dissertation About the Right Use of the Fathers* (London: 1709).

²² Anthony Horneck, *The Happy Ascetic; or The Best Exercise, Together with a Letter to a Person of Quality, Concerning the Holy Lives of the Primitive Christians* (London: 1681). Horneck is actually better known as the initiator of the first Religious Society Among Anglicans, in 1678 (see page 73 below).

²³ Nathaniel Marshall, *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church* (London: 1714).

²⁴ Eamon Duffy, "Primitive Christianity Revived; Religious Renewal in Augustan England," in *Studies in Church History* 14 (1977):287.

Non-Jurors at the end of the eighteenth century a special emphasis on ancient Christianity. Gordon Rupp traces the history of the Non-Jurors and notes their attempts—in response to the liturgical corruptions they perceived as being present after the ascension of William III to the throne—to link themselves, especially their episcopate and liturgy, to the primordial church. They were fond of studying the Fathers, the ancient liturgies, and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and they desired to draw a direct line between themselves and a monarchical episcopate begun at Jerusalem.²⁵

In light of this, two facts are important for analyzing the roots of John Wesley's emphasis on reviving ancient Christianity. First, there was obvious attention paid by Wesley to the literary productions of High Church Anglicans and others who shared their ecclesiology and their concern for the primitive church. Wesley was well acquainted with Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, and it and Fleury's *The Manners of the Ancient Christians* were required reading at Kingswood.²⁶ In addition to "The Christian Library" Wesley actually included in required reading lists for Kingswood and the Holy Club numerous titles by those who were either High Church or sympathetic with their position. Many of these are strongly oriented toward primitive Christianity; e.g., Grabe's *Spicelegium*; Wake's *Apostolic Epistles and Fathers*; Marshall's *Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church*; and Robert Nelson's *Companion for the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England*.²⁷ Even if no other direct links between Wesley and the High Church predilection for primitivistic ecclesiology could be found, the literary link is undeniable.

It is further significant that the Non-Juror John Clayton joined the Oxford Holy Club in 1731 or 1732, subsequent to which he became a close friend of John Wesley. According to Green, Clayton joined with the Holy Club largely because it seemed to him like a return to apostolic tradition; while he, in turn, had opportunity through the new society to further the

²⁵ Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England 1688-1791* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966) 17-22. Cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 26-33.

²⁶ John Wesley, "A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, Near Bristol," in *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1872, vol. XIII: *Addresses, Essays, Letters*) 283-84. We know from Wesley's journal that he read at least twice Fleury's *Manners of the Ancient Christians*; see John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.*, 8 vols. (ed. Nehemiah Curnock repr. vol. I: *14th October 1735 - 13th June 1738* (London: Epworth, 1931) 198.

²⁷ See Vivian H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley* (New York: St. Martin's, 1961) 274. Cf. Schmidt, vol. II part II, 104-5; Eamon Duffy, p. 298. Rack contends that although numerous Puritan writings are found in "The Christian Library," Wesley's *Journal*, diary, and other writings reveal a preference for High Church and Catholic material (Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 307).

Wesleys' interests in the church of antiquity.²⁸ In the summer of 1733 Wesley accompanied Clayton to Manchester, where he was introduced to several of Clayton's Non-Juror friends, including John Byrom and Thomas Deacon. The result was Wesley's exposure to the primitivistic emphases of the High Church Non-Jurors, and a section written by Wesley was actually included in the Appendix to Thomas Deacon's *A Complete Collection of Devotions*.²⁹ Later Wesley was considered part of a learned group, including Byrom, Deacon, Clayton, and Robert Thyer, which met for discussion of the patristic writings and other theological works.³⁰ This early acquaintance with the High Church tradition in the form of the Non-Jurors further establishes and strengthens the connection between Wesley's desire for restitution of the ancient church and that High Church part of Anglicanism which had made this so central a theme.

High Church Anglicanism and the Religious Societies

Despite the encouragement from High Churchmen for the Church of England to reorient itself after the pattern of the early Christians, it was early recognized that a practical method for implementing the ancient morality was needed if change was to occur. Such a method was found beginning in London in 1678 with the initiating of what became known as the "Religious Societies."³¹ First at Savoy, and very shortly thereafter at St. Peter and St. Michael, the number of societies multiplied, all of which were under the strict oversight of the state church. Each one was under the direction of a priest, no prayers could be said in the societies other than those stemming from the prayer-book, controversial discussions about ecclesiology or theology were not permitted, and membership was open only to devout Anglicans. Clearly these early societies were inherently committed to a conservative position

²⁸ Green, 173-74.

²⁹ Thomas Deacon, *A Compleat Collection of Devotions, both Publick and Private, Taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England* (London: 1734). See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 31-32. Cf. Piette, 279; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 90.

³⁰ See Green, 159.

³¹ See G.V. Portus, *Caritas Anglicana* (London: Mowbrays, 1912) 1-27; F.W.B. Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies 1520-1799* (St. Leonard's on Sea: Budd and Gillatt, 1963) 125-49. E.G. Rupp offers an informative account of the rise and nature of both the early Religious Societies and their connection to Methodism, 290-95; 327-30. Cf. Dudley W. R. Dahlmann, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) 67-108.

from their inception, and even in Samuel Wesley Sr.'s day they were characterized by a strong High Church presence.³²

It was Anthony Horneck, minister at Savoy, who first began advocating the society concept as a means of regulating and modelling the church's adherence to the primitive faith. Horneck was, himself, an adamant proclaimer of the virtues of restoring the ethos of early Christianity, as seen in both his *The Happy Ascetik; or The Best Exercise*³³ and *The Sirenes; or Delight and Judgment*.³⁴ Duffy says of Horneck: "In the heavenly lives of the Primitive Christians Horneck found a model for the Christian life; in the patristic orientation of restoration anglicanism he found an encouragement to revive that strictness of the Primitive Church. The societies were the result."³⁵

What is seen in the societies, then, is a desire to reinstate early Christianity within the context of High Church Anglicanism. Like the early church they were involved in holiness—fasting, prayer, frequent communion, charitable works, reading of Scripture—but their liturgy, vestments, hierarchy, and support of the state church kept them fast in the stream of High Churchism.

Despite being suspected of subversion and suffering harassment at the end of the rule of James II, the Religious Societies continued to propagate primitive Christian principles well into the eighteenth century, and Rupp sees them as proliferating in the 1730s.³⁶ Samuel Wesley was himself committed to the value of societies, having started a Religious Society in close connection to the reformational Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.³⁷

It is easy, therefore, to make a connection between these early Religious Societies and John Wesley, especially in light of the character of the Oxford Methodists and the later workings of the Wesleyan side of Methodism. Wesley early on had direct contact with and access to the Religious Societies of the 1730s which were simply the outgrowth of the 1670s High Church

³² See Duffy, 290. Piette mentions Woodward's opinion that at the beginning of the reign of William III there were 39 societies in London and Westminster and that by William's death there were over 100 (Piette, 187).

³³ See footnote 22.

³⁴ Anthony Horneck, *The Sirenes; or Delight and Judgment* (2nd ed.; London: 1690).

³⁵ Duffy, 290. Cf. Rupp, 290-95. For a contemporary account of Horneck and the rise of the Religious Societies see Josiah Woodward, *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in the City of London* (3d ed.; London: 1701). Cf. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 86.

³⁶ Rupp, 327. This is disputed; Piette's opinion is that by 1735 the old Religious Societies of the High Church had drastically reduced in number (Piette, 189).

³⁷ Rupp, 294-95. Cf. Schmidt, vol. I, p. 44; Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 53.

movement of Horneck and others. In addition, Wesley's own father was a propagator and participant within the later Reformation Societies movement.

Drawing the connection between Wesley and the Religious Societies is exactly what Henry Rack does, describing in detail the manner in which Wesley adapted the organizational format and primitivistic principles of the Religious Societies for both the Oxford Methodists and the whole "Connexion" of societies later to form. Rack notes the Religious Societies' background behind the "Rules of the United Societies," documents the recruiting of members for Methodism from the older societies, and sees a striking continuity of primitivistic aims. It is true that Rack also documents considerable differences which existed between the Wesleyan Connexion and the older societies. Because the Methodist societies differed both amongst themselves and from the older societies in terms of numerous cultural and societal factors, there was not exact replication from one society to another, either within one generation or across generations.³⁸ Nonetheless, the similarities between Wesley's Methodist Connexion and the older Religious Societies are profound.

Despite the clear differences between the old societies and the Methodist adaptation of the concept, the point for the purpose of this study is made. John Wesley's notions of primitivistic Christianity were furthered by his contact with the High Church Religious Societies which originated in the latter half of the seventeenth century and continued in the first half of the eighteenth. Early within the formation of the Wesleyan movement John Wesley had seen in the older High Church Religious Societies the model which became for him so central in his attempt to bring ancient Christianity into his England. He, therefore, implemented the society method at Oxford, and he combined his vision of a Religious Society with that of the Moravians when he instituted the society idea in Georgia. The later Methodist Connexion was to a large degree the direct descendant of what Horneck's societies had been. It is interesting that when Wesley later drew up an account of the history of Methodism, he separated the movement chronologically into three stages, in accordance with what he saw as the three types of Religious Societies for which he was responsible.³⁹

³⁸ Rack, *Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism*, 582-90.

³⁹ See Curnock's annotations in John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley, A. M.*, 8 vols. (ed. Nehemiah Curnock, repr., vol. I: *14th October 1735 - 13th June 1738*; London: Epworth, 1938) 198. Wesley recounts three phases to Methodism: one beginning with the Oxford Club in November 1729; the next beginning in April of 1736 with the society in Georgia; and the final stage beginning in May 1738 in London with the founding of the Fetter Lane Society. Cf. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols., vol. XIII, 305-6; Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 51.

High Church Anglicanism in the Wesley Family

The High Churchism within Wesley's own family is a well-known and often told story. Both Samuel and Susanna rebelled against the Puritanism of their upbringings to become staunchly supportive of the High Church as adults. Susanna herself, although apparently maintaining the pietistic attitudes toward holiness and the nurture of children which she learned as a child, was devoutly High Church and Non-Juror. Some have questioned whether or not Wesley's tendency to depart from standard High Churchism may have come from the significant impact of Susanna on his spiritual life. Others have doubted this conclusion.⁴⁰ What is certain is that, in view of the extreme High Church commitment of both of Wesley's parents, there was no concern in the Wesley household to promote a *Puritan* primitivism which would later come to fruition in the primitivism of John Wesley the adult Methodist. If an emphasis on primitivism learned as a child was to later take Wesley away from the precepts of the High Church, this would have stemmed from the High Church's primitivistic emphasis, as examined above. In fact, with Samuel Wesley's High Churchism and his role in the Religious Societies movement, and with Susanna's High Churchism and status as a Non-Juror, it would be surprising if High Church primitivism was not a frequent topic of study and discussion in the Wesley home. Obviously, what is known of Wesley's early family life points to a High Church background as the source for the later Methodist emphasis on primitive Christianity.⁴¹

The Effect of Primitivism on Wesley's Relationship to High Church Anglicanism

Almost from the inception of the Wesleyan movement there was tension between what Wesley thought constituted authentic Christianity and what he saw at work within the Anglicanism to which he was so committed. His unwillingness to leave the state church is well documented, but so are the numerous ways in which he adapted, over time, High Church Anglicanism to fit his understanding of "real Christianity." Although he "lived and died" within the Anglican communion, Wesley was constantly on the brink of seeing a genuine separation take place between the Methodist Connexion and his beloved Anglican communion.

⁴⁰ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 46-50.

⁴¹ Campbell draws detailed attention to the role of Samuel Wesley in giving his son a vision for Christian antiquity, although he classifies Samuel as a conservative primitivist and John as a progressive (see footnote 6 above). I am mystified as to why Susanna's influence is neglected in Campbell's detailed examination, when clearly her High Church Non-Juror stance was significant for son John. See Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 11-26.

The appellation "Methodists" was early on tagged onto the Oxford Holy Club because of the methodical piety which began to take shape among its members. This penchant for holiness, in contrast to so much of Anglicanism, was nothing more than Christian concern for right living in light of the gospel of Jesus, but it was perceived by many Anglicans as an attempt to resurrect "works righteousness." With time, numerous other differences surfaced between Wesley's form of Anglicanism and the traditions of the state church. His emphasis on the early church's pattern of fasting, the frequency of celebrating the eucharist, the emphasis on lay ministry and lay preaching, the unwillingness of Wesley to honor the lines separating the dioceses (seen in the fact that he preached where he wanted, often in open fields), an interest in baptism by immersion, the enthusiasms that so often accompanied the field preaching, the creation of the network of societies all carefully arranged and overseen by Wesley, the chapels and preaching houses which Wesley eventually had to register as Dissenting institutions, and, of course, Wesley's ever-present emphases upon justification by faith, perfection, and assurance put doctrinal and emotional distance between the Methodists and the established church.⁴²

By instituting these changes from within traditional Anglicanism, Wesley hoped to conform his movement to the church he perceived in antiquity, without compromising the relationship he enjoyed with the state church. His preference was to reform Anglicanism in his day, not create a new fellowship. With time this became more difficult. Despite Wesley's efforts to keep his movement staunchly grounded in the Church of England, the progressive nature of his reforms created conflict wherever he perceived the Christianity of the ancient church to be different from the church of his day. Schmidt summarizes well the issue for Wesley:

Primitive Christianity, which John Wesley affirmed with ever-increasing emphasis, began to determine more and more his course. It became more and more clear to him that the essential feature was the faith which lays hold of justifying grace and allows itself to be transformed by the Spirit of God. The key to John Wesley's spiritual development is to be found in this living involvement in primitive Christianity.⁴³

Perhaps no issue showed as clearly the movement of Wesley away from Anglicanism as that of the ordination controversy. Throughout his ministry Wesley had refused to offer ordination to his lay preachers. Although there was tension over this issue and although some had performed priestly functions (without Wesley's permission) within the Methodist communion,

⁴² See Campbell's description of Wesley as a "progressive" primitivist in *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 9-53.

⁴³ Schmidt, vol. I, 222.

Wesley always reserved the right of ordination for the episcopacy, seeing a direct ancestral connection between the Anglican episcopacy and the early church.⁴⁴ However, with the movement of Methodism to North America and then with the Revolutionary War of 1776, the civil roots of that portion of the Methodist Connexion which was in the new United States were severed. The relationship between Anglican Methodists and the established church had been tenuously preserved in England due to historic connections; but in the United States no relationship between church and government would provide Methodists with the same privileges associated with civil religion. There were far fewer ordained Anglicans with Methodist sympathies. Neither was there the direct oversight of John Wesley over the Methodist Connexion. These facts, combined with the unwillingness of the Anglican episcopacy in both the United States and England to ordain priests within Methodism, created havoc in the American branch of Wesley's movement.

Being both intensely practical in his management of Methodism and committed to ancient biblical precedent in ecclesiastical issues, Wesley eventually chose to perform the episcopal function within Methodism and to ordain not only priests, but to give episcopal privileges of ordination to Thomas Coke, and through him to Francis Asbury and others. Telling is the letter which Wesley wrote to the American Methodists explaining his decision (see page 68 above). "They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church," Wesley says. He had become convinced that the offices of elder, pastor, and episcopate were biblically and originally sanctioned to perform the same functions within the church.

When faced with an issue as monumental as the established church's exclusive privilege in ordination (and knowing full well the controversy in which he was involving his movement), Wesley maintained a decisive commitment to primitive Christianity. While he remained an Anglican, the progressive changes created by his adherence to primitivistic Christianity had altered his theology and the course of the Methodist movement.

Conclusion

Because Wesley did move with time toward separation from Anglicanism, it is logical to ask how motivated he was by Dissenters. Certainly there are strong parallels between Wesley and various strains of Puritanism. Was he a closet Puritan?

The best answer is that he was not. It was John Wesley's intention from the outset to remain within the Church of England. This fact is not at all

⁴⁴ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 419, 506ff.

challenged by Wesley's attachment to primitivistic ecclesiastical ideals. In fact, what the above has shown is that Wesley's commitment to primitivism was from the beginning nothing more than a product of his commitment to High Church Anglicanism. What is clear is that in the ecclesiastical milieu of Wesley's day, challenging the church to replicate ancient Christianity was not only acceptable to those committed to Anglicanism, but it was viewed as a means whereby the apathetic and morally reprehensible aspects of Anglicanism could be eradicated. Certainly, for Wesley, and ideally for his contemporaries, replicating the ancient church within the Methodist Connexion should have guaranteed the movement's orthodoxy and its connection to the state church.

Nonetheless, it is the case that uncounted numbers of ecclesiastical revolutions have begun with someone's decision to return to the beliefs and practices of the early church. So often the jettisoning of what is considered orthodoxy is the result of efforts originally intended to do nothing of the sort; encouragement to holiness and commitment are often originally the only objectives.

In many ways Methodism fits this description. It is ironic that the impulse which continued to push Wesley and Methodism toward separation from the Church of England was Wesley's adherence to the call to primitivism which was central for so many High Church Anglicans. Wesley wanted to be High Church Anglican. He read the "correct" literature. He attended a "correct" university. He came from a lineage and an ecclesiastical background calculated to retain him for Anglicanism. He followed a course which led him to accept Holy Orders, and he instructed others heading for the same. But in the end, in terms of his movement's future attachment to Anglicanism, his commitment to High Church primitivism actually proved his undoing. Wesley personally always remained within the Church of England; his movement's commitment to the state church was short lived.

Perhaps such an end will always come when Christians make an adherence to ancient Christianity their goal. There is no denomination, no matter how pristine its conception, which with time does not find itself challenged by those of its number who perceive something of the ancient church to be at odds with their contemporary situation. Because denominations are comprised of imperfect followers of the Lord Jesus, it is appropriate for the faith of the church chronologically closest to Christ and the apostolic age to challenge those farther removed, necessitating continual evaluation and change on the part of those who keep seeking their identity in primitive Christianity.

Therefore, although Wesley was well acquainted with the Puritan impulse, it was not a direct influence from Puritanism which created the parallels between Methodism and the Puritans, but rather these

commonalities are seen across numerous like-minded movements who share a desire to reinstate the ancient faith. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century High Church Anglicans emphasizing primitive Christianity would never have admitted their parallels to Puritanism, but parallels existed nonetheless, with Methodism's concern for primitive Christianity tending to prove the connection.

RETHINKING JESUS ON DIVORCE

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Divorce is one of those rare subjects for which academia has the potential to make a direct and meaningful impact on the real mess of people's lives. Recent academic literature on divorce in biblical texts reflects an awareness of this.¹ Even so, more and more studies are pointing out (quite unintentionally) just how difficult it is for 20th century readers even to understand the received texts on the subject, let alone gain any direction from them. Did Matt 19:1-9 precede or follow Mark 10:1-12? What was Jesus' view of the law in Matt 5? What does *πορνεία* mean in the Matthean texts? Was the "exception clause" original to Jesus or was it later Matthean redaction? And of course many other questions abound. The more that is published the more fractured the topic becomes, and the more hopeless one may feel about whether anything relevant for current questions can be known about the subject.² Both scholarly and popular approaches wrestle to fit the pieces together.

Academic Approaches

Scholars have tended to focus on the individual units of the various texts. They distinguish between two "dominical logia" (sayings of Jesus) on divorce. I will call these "first" and "second" sayings, based on the order of their occurrence in the Mark/Matt story. Scholars have generally worked through traditional layers more or less as follows:

(1) The "second" saying, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery," occurs as an isolated statement in Luke 16:18 and

¹ Among others, see J. Fitzmyer, "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence," in *Theological Studies* 37(1976) 223-26; R. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982) 247-48; W. Heth and G. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce: The Problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984) 200 (although the pastoral concern stated here undermines the thesis of the entire book. Cf. 126, 198-99); and U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Zurich: B/N, 1985) I:270-79.

² Cf. Luz, *Matthäus* (1985) I:73, who says the literature on *πορνεία* and the exception clause is "unsurveyable." This does not stop the flow of material on the topic, however. See most recently, A. Comes, *Divorce: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

is mostly paralleled in Matt 5:32. For this reason, the saying is taken to have been originally an individual unit of tradition and is usually assigned to source Q (cf. Luke 16:18; Matt 5:32).

(2) The Q form of the tradition is somewhat different from the form of the same saying found in Mark (10:11-12; cf. 1 Cor 7:10-11). Some scholars think that both the Q form of the saying and the Markan form of the saying "circulated early in the tradition as isolated sayings."³

(3) The Markan form of the saying was then picked up (10:11-12) and added to the end of two other items which had been previously connected: (a) a traditional pronouncement story about an encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees (10:2-5), and (b) a concluding statement (the "first") by Jesus, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (10:6-8).⁴

(4) On this basis, Matthew is said to carry the process even further by depending upon and altering both Mark 10:1-12 (at Matt 19:1-9) and Q (at Matt 5:32).

Based on this kind of "tradition history" approach, the first saying, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder," in the Mark 10/Matt 19 story, is most often taken as now overshadowed by the second saying. The issue now becomes "What constitutes adultery?" As such, the first saying is understood to prohibit divorce (i.e., marriage is indissoluble;⁵ divorce does not work),⁶ and the second saying prohibits remarriage (as adultery).⁷

Because of this, the second saying has received the greatest amount of attention.⁸ Scholars have focused on separating tradition and redaction from the genuine sayings of Jesus and on discovering redactional intent.⁹ In effect, where the Gospels have conflated the various early traditions, the scholars have attempted to disentangle them to their "original" state. The major concern then becomes whether it was divorce or remarriage that the historical

³ Guelich, *Sermon*, 199; see also A. Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple* (Lund: 1965) 72. Fitzmyer, "Matthean Divorce Texts," 204, sees the Mark and Q sayings as "related." See also R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, ET by John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963) 132 and 148.

⁴ Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 47-48, says of Mark 10:1-12 that "the artificiality of the composition is as clear as day" and that the present form came about at the literary rather than at the oral stage.

⁵ J. Dupont, *Marriage et divorce dans l'évangile* (Belgium: Abbaye de Saint-André, a.s.b.l., 1959) 157; and J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1971) I:225; Guelich, *Sermon*, 202; Heth/Wenham, *Jesus*, 198 and 126.

⁶ Guelich, *Sermon*, 246. See also Andrew Comes, *Divorce*, 193; cf. 195, 214, 234-36.

⁷ Heth/Wenham, *Jesus*, 47 and 120-22. Also Comes, *Divorce*, 220.

⁸ Guelich, *Sermon*, 199 and 246.

⁹ Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 1 and 6.

Jesus and/or the "original tradition" forbade as adultery and whether there were any exceptions.¹⁰ Decisions on such questions are often made on the basis of the interrelationships and syntax of the various Gospel accounts of *the second saying alone*, aside from the broader context of the accounts as they exist.¹¹

Popular Approaches

More popular approaches, on the other hand, tend to conflate the Gospel texts. As with academic authors, popular authors often proceed on an assumption that our current Gospels are insufficient in the form they have been written and received. But now, the "historical Jesus" is reconstructed, not by way of form and redaction critical methods, but by precritical or noncritical confluences which make all the Gospels say what each Gospel says.

William Luck, for example, has little regard for the more critical approaches and resolves the problem of the relationship between Matt 19 and Mark 10 simply by devising a conflated reading:

Rather than speculate about traditions with limited memories, we would be well advised to try [to] construct the original from the preserved accounts. In doing so, we should not be deterred by the fact that we do not have a unified written account of the complete dialogue. We have the parts, and, if we respect the integrity of the parts, and try and blend them, presuming the least amount of redaction . . . we may arrive at a conflate reading that is the base common to the "traditions" and perhaps well known to everybody involved.¹²

Based on such a conflated reading, neither Matt nor Mark is considered for its own sake. Instead, the newly constructed conflated reading is regarded as the original, the real event at the base of the traditions. This becomes the new construct for interpreting the individual elements in each account. Thus, "[T]his running dialogue eliminates the question of whether Jesus brought up Moses or they did. The answer is that both did, though not at the same time."¹³

More is at stake, though, than incidental historical questions. C. E. W. Dorris, for example, does not deal at all with the form of Jesus' statement in Mark 10:11, or with the context of Mark, but merely adds the exception clause from Matt 19:9: "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away

¹⁰ Ibid., 132; also Fitzmyer, "Matthean Divorce Texts."

¹¹ Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*; Jeremias, *NT Theology*, I:225; Guelich, *Sermon*, 199-203 and 243-48. Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry*, 82.

¹² W. Luck, *Divorce and Remarriage: Recovering the Biblical View* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) 131.

¹³ Ibid., 132.

his wife, **saving for the cause of fornication**" (Matt 19:9) "and marry another, committeth adultery against her" (emphasis, GDC).¹⁴ In this approach, the difference between the texts is not really a difference; it is rather a key feature even for the texts which do not have it.

Assessment and Procedure

While there are certainly many differences between scholarly and popular approaches, there are also some curious similarities. For at the heart of both approaches—whether one seeks the "real Jesus" by way of historical-critical methods or by way of noncritical, conflationary methods—there are three very important assumptions which guide how the various divorce texts are treated: (1) the sayings of Jesus constitute his "law" (legislation) on divorce/remarriage; (2) the sayings of Jesus pronounce marriage to be "indissoluble"; (3) the key and dominant part of the tradition is found in the second saying, "Whoever divorces his wife [except for *πορνεία*] and marries another commits adultery." As such, divorce does not work, and remarriage is the main issue.

In the present study, I will do the unthinkable and challenge everybody.¹⁵ In the process, I will offer a different kind of paradigm for reading and applying the various texts on divorce. My thesis is as follows: In both Matt and Mark on the question of divorce, Jesus presses his followers to read both Scripture and his own words noncasuistically; he instructs them to adopt a hermeneutical and theological perspective which searches for God, not which searches for authorizations or prohibitions. Consequently, what is under attack in the two Gospel accounts is the whole practice of searching for *authorization* for divorce and remarriage. Jesus himself is crying out, "Look for the heart of God." He is not attempting to draw distinctions between divorce and remarriage to determine which is worse or to offer new laws as replacements for Deut. To make this case, I will argue (1) that Jesus directly attacks the Pharisees, not Moses or the law of Moses; (2) that Jesus decries a nomistic/casuistic approach to Deut 24 (and thus to all Scripture) as if it were intended to provide "authorization" for divorce and remarriage; (3) that the governing item of both Matt and Mark is "What God joined, people are to stop separating" and that this concept is based on a midrashic view of Genesis 1 and 2 as providing a kind of "creation covenant"; and (4) that the

¹⁴ C. E. W. Dorris, *A Commentary on the Gospel by Mark* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1938) 229.

¹⁵ With a great deal of hesitation, I might add, realizing the arrogance of doing so. But the hope is for an interchange of ideas.

differences between the accounts help us to apply the story to ever new contexts and situations.

The method of the present study will be a focused literary analysis of the parallel stories in Mark 10 and Matt 19 and the related account in Matt 5. Mark and then Matt will be examined for how the divorce logia function within each context. Mark will be taken first because of its simplicity and straightforwardness. No theory of Gospel dependencies is assumed.¹⁶ Other important matters—relating to Luke, Q, early traditions, or historical-critical questions—will be held for other occasions.

Mark 10:1-12

Mark's story on divorce appears in the central section of the Gospel (8:27–10:52) in which several themes are intricately interwoven: conflict (9:14; 10:2), predictions of rejection and death amid conflict (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33-34), the private instruction of the disciples in the face of conflict (9:28, 33; 10:10; cf. 4:10; 7:17), and the way of the cross and its high costs (8:34-38; 9:42-50; 10:17-31, 35-45). "Jesus in conflict" is a guiding emphasis in Mark, though no single group is the target of ridicule. Challengers may be demons, Roman or Jewish authorities, Jesus' own family, his disciples, or perhaps even God.¹⁷ In this central section the disciples are in conflict with the scribes over casting out demons (9:14ff.), and the Pharisees are the antagonists against Jesus over divorce (10:2ff.).

Like other similar stories in Mark (cf. 4:10-20; 7:14-23; 9:14-29), this one is divided between what was said publicly and what was said to the disciples privately. "In the house" (10:10), perhaps a Markan stylistic feature,¹⁸ indicates the purpose and function of the story within this section of the narrative: it is another example of Jesus instructing his disciples in the face of conflict, this time over a common practice relating to the interpretation of the law of Moses.

Verses 1-9

The conflict itself centers around the function and role of Deut 24 in the divorce debate. When the Pharisees say, "Moses permitted [us] to write a bill of divorce and to divorce" (v.4), they are looking to Deut 24 as an authorization for the practice of divorce. Jesus directly challenges this use of

¹⁶ See Fitzmyer, "Matthean Divorce Texts," 206f. fn. 33-34, for a discussion of this.

¹⁷ For a thorough discussion see D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 73-100; R. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, vol. 34A in *Word Biblical Commentary* (ed. D. Hubbard et al.; Dallas: Word, 1989) xxiv.

¹⁸ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 377.

Scripture, charging the Pharisees with abusing the law of God. Four items, when taken together, make this conclusion compelling:

(1) Jesus contrasts “you” and “your obstinacy” (vv. 3, 5) with God’s creative act (v. 6), setting the entire conflict in the lap of the Pharisees. The conflict is not between Jesus and Moses, or Moses and God; it is between the Pharisees and God.

(2) Jesus conflates Gen 1:27 and 2:24 (vv. 6-8) to directly challenge the Pharisees’ abuse of Deut 24:

But from the beginning of creation, male and female he made them (Gen 1:27). Because of this, a man shall leave his father and mother [and shall be joined to his wife] and the two shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24).¹⁹

This conflation is now to be read as a single verse. As such, it changes the original force of the phrase “because of this (ἐνεκεν τούτου, v. 7). In Gen 2:24 (LXX) “because of this” directly follows the account of woman being taken out of man and functions to explain that the joining of a man and woman in marriage was a re-uniting, since woman had been taken out of man. In Mark, however, “because of this” refers specifically to God’s making man as male and female: “Because God made them male and female, the two shall become one flesh.” God’s creative act itself implies divine purpose and that Deut 24 could not have been what God originally wanted.

The importance of the conflation can hardly be exaggerated. It has the effect of midrashically identifying a kind of “creation covenant” between God and humankind. Since God acted on behalf of humankind, making them male and female with direct implications about union, then the expected response of humankind is stated: “because of this, a man shall leave and be joined to . . .” (vv. 7-8). This conflation is a direct slap at any use of Deut 24 to find divine authorization for divorce.

(3) Jesus points to the creation again in the phrase “what God united.” The verb συνέζευξεν (“united”) explains the conflation of Gen 1:27 and 2:24. Whereas a man “shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh,” God made it possible when he “made (ἐποίησεν) them male and female.” Both words (“made” and “united”) are simple aorists, denoting what God did at creation. The Pharisees, in using Scripture to authorize divorce, were using God’s own law against his creation.

(4) Finally, Jesus directly confronts the Pharisees’ ongoing practice of divorce in the statement “What God united, man is to stop separating.” This is

¹⁹ The phrase “and shall be joined to his wife” is missing in some early and important manuscripts. Even so, the sense of the quotation would not be changed since it would obviously still be referring to the husband and wife becoming one flesh, not the son and his mother, or the son and his parents. For a discussion of the problem, see B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: UBS, 1971) 104f.

the culmination of Jesus' argument against the Pharisees and is his direct answer to their original question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" As such, it is quite the crucial matter. It is often translated as "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Then, in light of the second logion in vv. 11-12, the phrase is taken to mean that since only God marries people, human divorce does not really work; the couple is still married in the eyes of God. It is as if the statement reads, "What God joined when these two got married cannot now be broken apart, since they are still married in the eyes of God."²⁰

This, however, misses the point. In Mark, Jesus is not addressing whether people can defeat God; he is rather addressing the *customary practices* of the people, which the Pharisees, in their search for "authorization," encouraged. This practice contradicts the creative act of God. "Man is to stop separating" (ἄνθρωπος μὴ χωρίζετω) consists of μὴ with the present imperative and in the current context indicates that the practice of divorce²¹ is common and that it should stop, or at the very least, that it should continually be avoided.²² This is not an abstract philosophical statement about what people should not do, nor about what people cannot do; it is a relevant and real statement about what the Pharisees were doing: using God's law to find legal authorizations to do what God had never wanted: divorce.

In sum, the four items just listed, when taken together, argue forcefully that the focus of this Markan example of "Jesus in conflict" is the Pharisees' abuse not only of God's law, but even more of God's creation covenant: (1) The hardness of *your* heart; (2) the conflation of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 emphasizing the union which God *made* at creation; (3) the simple reference

²⁰ See Jeremias, *NT Theology*, 225; Guelich, *Sermon*, 246; Heth/Wenham, *Jesus*, 46, 112; Comes, *Divorce*, 193 (despite his statement on 192).

²¹ There has been quite a discussion over the meaning of the two words "separate" and "divorce" in the NT. However, in such contexts, we should not take them as materially different from each other since (1) they were commonly used interchangeably in marriage contracts of the time (Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2d rev. and aug. ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979] 890 [hereafter, BAG]); (2) they are used interchangeably in 1 Cor 7:12-15; and (3) they occur side by side in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. See also Fitzmyer, "Matthean Divorce Texts," 211-12.

²² Blass, DeBrunner, Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) sections 335f.; Robertson, 852-54. Warnings have come in recent years about over-reading such constructions. See, especially, S. Porter, *Verbal Aspects in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood in Studies in Biblical Greek*, vol. 1 (ed. D. A. Carson; New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 321-63. Even so, it is also a mistake to ignore how such constructions work contextually when attempting to derive meaning. B. Fanning, in a major study on this matter, comments that in specific commands "the present almost always means 'stop doing [this action presently occurring]," and in general precepts "the present prohibition usually means 'make it your practice not to do'" (*Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1990] 337; see also 325-88).

that God *united* man as male and female in his creative act (i.e., showing divine purpose); and (4) the instruction not to be a part of the *thriving practice* of divorce. All of these elements are aimed at the practice of the Pharisees. According to Jesus, they add insult to God on top of injury to people, using a law which should never have been needed (Deut 24) to legalize what God had never intended (divorce). Divorce contradicts what God did at creation. It is one thing to see that the law in Deut 24 makes some provisions about the reality of divorce; it is another to claim that the law authorizes divorce. In effect, Jesus says:

What God did at creation, when he made man as male and female, intending their complete union—you Pharisees stop destroying it. Your use of Deuteronomy 24 to find authorization for divorce to the neglect of what God has always wanted from the beginning has caused you to miss the point of it all—Genesis and Deuteronomy alike. As a result, you are interfering with the very purpose and creative act of God.

In Mark, this is all the Pharisees get to hear (vv. 2-9). The conflict has been brought to a halt.

Verses 10-12

In the second block (vv. 10-12) Jesus draws out the implications of his previous statements. As in similar sections of Mark in which Jesus instructs the disciples privately (cf. 4:10; 7:17; 9:28, 33), this latter section states more fully what was incipient in the former section. He makes the same point to his disciples that he had just made to the Pharisees, only in different words: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, is guilty of adultery against her; and if a wife marries another man, having divorced her husband, she is guilty of adultery."

Both statements in vv. 11-12 make a single point about the breaking and making of marriages²³; in view of God's original creation and purpose, such activity is nothing short of adultery. A comparison of the two sections demonstrates that Jesus' statements in vv. 11-12 amount to his own commentary on what had just happened in vv. 2-9:

²³ "Against her and if a wife marries another man, having divorced her husband, she is guilty of adultery" (both found only in Mark) are best explained as Markan redaction apparently to show that Jesus' teaching applies equally to men and women. "If a wife marries . . ." reads literally "if she marries . . ." (ἐάν αὐτή ἀπολύσασα) but cannot be referring to the woman in the previous phrase who was divorced by her husband, since this woman "divorces her husband" (ἀπολύσασα an active, not a passive, participle).

Statement to Pharisees (vv. 2-9)

1. Moses permitted us a bill of divorce (v. 4) (because you were obstinate. [v. 5])
2. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (v. 2)
3. What God united, man is to stop separating. (v. 9)
4. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (v. 2); from the beginning, . . . male and female (v. 6)

Restatement to Disciples (vv. 11-12)

1. Whoever divorces his wife/marries another (v. 11), abuse of Deut 24:1 as authorization to divorce
2. Whoever divorces/remarries . . . adultery (v. 11)
3. Whoever divorces/remarries . . . adultery (v. 11)
4. Is guilty of adultery. (v. 11)

(1) The phrase "whoever divorces his wife and marries another" (v. 11) corresponds to v. 4, "*Moses* [in Deut 24] permitted one to write a bill of divorce." The phrase in v. 11 describes exactly what both the Pharisees and the disciples would have understood from Deut 24, because the context of that passage assumes that the remarriage of the divorcing parties was imminent. Jesus' statement, then, is tantamount to saying,

Whoever uses Deuteronomy 24 as authorization to go ahead and *divorce his wife and marry another* has in reality desecrated the law and rejected the original intentions of God who gave the law.

(2) The absolute nature of the statement "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery" (v. 11), corresponds to the absolute question in v. 2, which bluntly asks, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Instead of being a "yes" or "no," v. 11 implies: It is not a matter of law; it is a matter of what God has always wanted. So the answer in v. 11 arises from God's original desire at creation. Deut 24 is not rejected by Jesus; what is rejected is the way the Pharisees use it as authorization for divorce. But when Deut 24 is compared to Gen 1-2, it is clear God would never approve of any approach which interprets any law as sanction.²⁴

(3) In verse 11, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery" also corresponds to "What God united, man is to stop separating" (v. 9). Jesus answered the Pharisees (vv. 6-9) and the disciples (vv. 10-12) with these two statements which complement each other. Both statements are absolute, and both are based in Genesis 1-2. **To the Pharisees** Jesus proclaimed that Moses wrote the commandment, not to make divorce

²⁴ To explain this as simply a "partial retelling of the story" (as in Luck, *Divorce*, 154-56) is wholly inadequate. The explanation of the phrase must be explicable by the context.

and remarriage legal, but to deal with the reality of the hard-hearted neglect of God's will and indiscriminate divorce and remarriage without deference to the holiness of God and his people. *To the disciples* Jesus explained that those who use Deut 24 to authorize divorce fundamentally misunderstand God's action at creation (Genesis 1-2). And the intention of God from the beginning for perfect union between husband and wife is both absolute and unchanging.²⁵

(4) The phrase "is guilty of adultery"²⁶ (v. 11), then, answers the question in v. 2 ("Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?") in terms of Jesus' comment in v. 6 (on Gen 1-2): "From the beginning of creation he made them male and female"; that is, marriage is not primarily a matter of law, it is a matter of God's creation and original intent—a matter of his creation covenant with mankind. To violate that covenant is to reject the very action and intention of God in creation. Therefore, what God united at creation, man is to stop putting asunder through divorce. In this context, then, "adultery" must be understood in terms of God's creation covenant, not in terms of the Mosaic law.

In Mark, Jesus' statement about divorce, remarriage, and adultery in vv. 11-12 is a restatement of vv. 2-9 in general and Genesis 1-2 in particular, and agrees with "What God united, man is to stop separating" (v. 9). As such, the pattern is consistent with previous similar sections in the Gospel of Mark. In this text, the desire of the Pharisees to find authorization in Deut 24 for a man to divorce his wife and marry another leads Jesus to point to God's implied covenant at creation. What Jesus advocates is a different way of seeing Scripture on this point: not as legislation, but as an expression of the inner heart of God. From that point of view, for marriage, anything which defiles God's original desire of faithful union is adultery. But of course, the Pharisees (the lawyers, the biblical scholars), concerned as they were with the many technicalities of the issue, had trouble seeing this point.

²⁵ It is simply intolerable that interpreters sometimes read these statements as being fundamentally different. For example, Comes sees vv. 6-9 as against divorce, while vv. 11-12 are against remarriage (*Divorce*, 193). This destroys the cohesiveness of the pericope in Mark and ignores the Markan tendency to explain the first part of a pericope in the second part, once Jesus and his disciples are alone "in the house" (cf. 4:10; 7:17; 9:28, 33).

²⁶ The translation is "guilty of adultery" is preferable to "commits adultery." Commentators sometimes attempt to read *commits* as durative, i.e., keeps on committing adultery, giving rise to the concept that second marriages are adulterous by nature. It is not, however, a supposed continual action of the verb that is at issue, but the contents of the verb. Μοιχᾶται, a present indicative, points out merely that the result is adultery. See C. D. Osburn, "Interpreting Greek Syntax" in *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practice* (Festschrift for Jack P. Lewis; ed. E. F. Kearley, et al.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986) 234-43.

Matthew 19:1-9

Like Mark, Matt defies a simple outline, and numerous themes are intertwined throughout the Gospel, including the kingdom of heaven, the person of the Messiah, the nature and cost of discipleship, and conflict with the Pharisees. The Pharisees are targets for Jesus. He brings against them a searing charge of hypocrisy. Throughout the Gospel, the heart, the inward being, and righteousness are set in bold relief against their showiness, hypocrisy, and externalism (cf., 5:20; 12:1-12; 15:1-11; 16:6, 11, 12; and esp. chap. 23). While Mark emphasizes conflict, Matt more specifically and thematically focuses on conflict with the Pharisees.

Matt 16:13-20:34 specifically deals with the demands of following Jesus, and the values of the kingdom of heaven are set forth²⁷: self-sacrifice and allegiance (16:24-17:13); faith (17:14-21); submission to authority (17:24-27); self-denial and humility (18:1-14); forgiveness and mercy (18:15-35); moral purity (19:1-12); innocence and humility (19:13-15); detachment from possessions (19:16-30); and position and service (20:1-16; 20-28). With the interspersions of Jesus' fate (viz., to suffer, be killed, and be raised: 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19) into the demands or values of the kingdom of heaven, the ultimate demand is shown: a willingness on the part of disciples to follow the steps of Jesus even to death. This is a call to total discipleship. Those who understand the demands or values of the kingdom in the context of suffering know what it is to think the things of God. It is in this context of the absoluteness of the values of the kingdom that Matt 19:1-9 appears as a call to moral purity in the face of the Pharisees' abuse of the law of Moses.

In Matt, the confrontation with the Pharisees on the matter of moral purity (divorce) is more pronounced than in Mark.²⁸ In fact, there are numerous differences of wording, arrangement, and contents between the two accounts. In Matt, the question is whether divorce is allowed "for just any cause." To answer this, Jesus begins with Gen 1-2, pointing out God's original intent and stating that "man is to stop putting asunder what God united." As in Mark, this is the crux of the argument. But in Matthew as contrasted with Mark, the Pharisees now object, "Why, then, did Moses give us Deut 24?" They are the ones who bring up Deut 24, and they do it in response to Genesis 1-2. Apparently, for Matt, their main concern was the proper grounds for divorce ("Is divorce allowed for just any cause?"), as seen

²⁷ My thanks to Larry Chouinard for bringing some of this to my attention, although he should not be held responsible for my specific development of the ideas here.

²⁸ The two accounts (Mark 10 and Matt 19) share several items: (1) the question; (2) Deut 24: the Law of Moses; (3) Gen 1-2: the intention of God from the beginning; (4) Jesus' conclusion about divorce; (5) Jesus' statement about adultery. This is Mark's order.

in the phrase in Deut 24:1, "a thing of uncleanness" in the wife, as a justification for the husband being allowed to hand her a writ of divorce, freeing her to remarry.

This different arrangement of material from Mark impacts the thrust of the story: (1) It causes the Pharisees (unlike in Mark) to overtly and intentionally pit Deut 24 against God's creative intent in Gen 1-2; (2) it has Jesus correcting the Pharisees' view that Moses commanded divorce, to the understanding that he only allowed divorce for human obstinacy; (3) it explains why Jesus' own statement that one who goes ahead and "divorces and remarries is guilty of adultery" was made directly to the Pharisees and not just privately to the disciples (as in Mark); and (4) it offers a plausible explanation for the much celebrated 'exception clause.'²⁹ Whatever its force, the clause is best seen as an emphasis of Matthew's Gospel, much the same as the other differences heighten his emphasis, an interpretation for his readers in his argument against the Pharisees. The clause does not, however, detract from the major thrust of the argument, nor does it become the major thrust. In Matt, the major thrust against divorce is stated even more strongly than in Mark, as is the emphasis against the Pharisees who consciously pit God's law against his creation covenant and thereby use the law to encourage people to divorce. But most of all (5) Matthew's different arrangement from Mark brings Matt 19:1-9 into a close relationship with Matt 5:27-32, showing that Matthew has worked the theme into its overall structure at a deeper level than Mark (regardless of which was written first) and that he has a more specific point in mind.

Matthew 5 and 19

Matthew characteristically mentions some important sayings of Jesus twice, relating them thematically and structurally.³⁰ As a result, Matt 5:31-32

²⁹ The 'exception clause' is beyond the scope of this study even though it is both important and quite complex. At least seven major positions have been seriously advocated, and a very lengthy bibliography could be generated on the matter. Interpreters have usually treated the exception clause in Matthew as the crucial matter in understanding Jesus on divorce—more important even than broader literary-contextual matters. As a result, the focus on the exception clause has distracted attention away from the major point of the text; e.g., Heth/Wenham, *Jesus*, 46 and 112, give two brief sentences to the question of Matt 19:6 ("What God has joined together . . ."), but numerous references to and long discussions of Matt 19:9 with its exception clause (see esp. 87-94 and 113-37). See also Luz, *Matthäus*, 273.

³⁰ Thus, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near," 3:2 and 4:17; "Ax at the root of the trees," 3:10 and 7:19; "Winnowing fork is in his hand," 3:12 and 25:29; "Cut off your hand," 5:28-30 and 18:8-9; and "Divorce and Adultery," 5:31 and 19:9. This was pointed out by Dupont, *Marriage et divorce*, 100-102, and cited in Heth/Wenham, *Jesus*, 49. See Fitzmyer, "Matthean Divorce Texts," 205 n. 31 for a definition of a "doublet"—items mentioned twice in a document from two sources. The question of original sources, however, has little impact on the

and 19:7-9 both follow the same general order and have the same general emphasis:

Matt 5:31-32

And it was said, "Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a writ of divorce."

"But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the matter of πορνεία, forces her into adultery and whoever ever marries a divorced woman is guilty of adultery."

Matt 19:7-9

And they said to him, "Why, therefore, did Moses command to give a writ of divorce and to divorce [her]?" He said to them, "Moses, because of your hard hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been this way.

But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for πορνεία, and marries another, is guilty of adultery."

It is at once apparent that both texts quote Deut 24 to address the question of the viability of divorce, and both have Jesus respond firmly against divorce. Not so apparent, however, is the proper interpretation of the larger context of Matt 5:17-48, which deals with Jesus' relationship to the law (and thus, to Deut). This is an enormous debate, but we may accept Graham Stanton's assessment: "There is general agreement that 'fulfillment' [in 5:17-20] implies that Jesus modifies in some ways contemporary understandings of the law."³¹

Building on this, I have proposed elsewhere (1) that Matt 5 is the beginning of a sustained argument against the Pharisees which culminates in chapter 23; (2) that Matt 5:17-48 is one of several summaries of Jesus' view of the ten commandments, reinterpreted prophetically (i.e., in the same manner as the OT prophets); and (3) that at issue is a contrast between the hermeneutical and theological perspectives of Jesus and the Pharisees, which cause them to read the same Scriptures in such radically different ways from

question of the final relationship of the two items in the finished product. See also Patte, *According to Matthew*, 262, for a listing of numerous parallels between the Sermon on the Mount and 19:3-20:16.

³¹ For an excellent but brief review of the debate, see especially G. Stanton, "The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945 to 1980," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985) II 25.3:1934-37. See also K. Snodgrass, "Matthew and the Law" in *SBL Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: SP, 1988) 536-54, for a strong defense of a "hermeneutical key" approach to Matthew, much as I argue for in this paper.

each other.³² In Matt, Jesus does not supplant Deut; rather, he contrasts his own God-centered perspective on the law with the nomistic disposition of the Pharisees.³³ This is extremely important for understanding the divorce texts in Matt.

Matthew 5:31-32 in Context

We must note that 5:31-32 occurs in the larger discussion of the prophetic (as against casuistic) reading of the law (5:17-48), and more immediately in a discussion on what (from the prophetic perspective) constitutes adultery (5:27-32). "Adultery" occurs four times in this two-part block, twice in vv. 27-28 and twice in v. 32. Two other items tie the two adultery sections together: the shortened formula, "And it was said," and the word "and" (δέ) which starts the phrase, showing a connection with the previous section.

This helps to put some of the details of 5:31-32 in context. For example, (1) the "exception clause" in 5:32 is somewhat obscure (as in 19:9), but it is not the primary issue. (2) Furthermore, the stark attitude against divorce is not more rigidly stated than *cut* "off your hand, pluck out your eye" in vv. 29-30, also speaking of adultery. Thus, as lust is characterized as adultery (vv. 27-30), so is any dealing with divorce (v. 32). Whether a man divorces his wife or marries a divorced woman, he is responsible for adultery.³⁴ As in Matt 19 and Mark 10, what is called adultery in Matt 5 is far more inclusive than any case of adultery casuistically defined. For Jesus, not only is the physical act of sexual intercourse outside one's own marriage adultery (as per the law), but so are lust (5:27f.) and involvement in divorce and remarriage

³² For a more complete discussion of this see, G. Collier, *The Forgotten Treasure: Reading the Bible like Jesus* (West Monroe, LA: Howard, 1993), 147-51 and 171-85.

³³ I note with interest the position of W. D. Davies and D. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; ed. J. A. Emerton, et al., Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) I:505-8, which I found after developing my own argument. Their argument approximates my own in part; viz., it is not Pharisaic interpretations *per se* that are at issue, but the nomistic perspective from which the interpretations originate. Note especially 508: "... although 5:21-48 does not oppose specific interpretations of the law, it does implicitly downplay a casuistic or legalistic approach or attitude. . . . Hence, in order to attain perfect conformity to God's will (5:48), one must be animated by something that cannot be casuistically formulated—things such as 'purity of heart' (5:8) and the thirst for peace (5:9). . . . This is why . . . Jesus is not for Matthew a legislator or rule maker in any usual sense, and why the evangelist has Jesus put so much emphasis upon love of God and love of neighbour, things which are unquantifiable. . . ."

³⁴ The form $\mu\omicron\lambda\chi\epsilon\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ ("forces her into adultery") is an aorist passive infinitive (only here in the NT). It is generally translated as a verb which indicates the woman's action, "makes her commit adultery" (KJV, NASV, TEV, et al.) or as a verb which indicates her subsequent status, "makes her an adulteress" (RSV, NRSV, ASV, and ERV). The NIV translates "causes her to become an adulteress."

(5:31-32). The common element in all these cases of adultery is the breaking of the purity of marriages. And all of this is aimed squarely at the Pharisees.

Comparison

When Matt 5:31-32 and 19:1-9 are compared in the overall context of Matt, it becomes clear that Jesus is not presented as making new laws on the topic (as replacements for Deut 24), nor are his words to be read as encyclopedia articles (covering all aspects of the topic). Instead, the argument is focused. The main target is the nomistic perspective of the Pharisees. Whereas Matt 5 says, "You have heard that it was said" (v. 27), and then, "It was also said" (v. 31), Matt 19 gives a specific example of it happening: The Pharisees come to Jesus quoting Deut 24:1. Yet it is their own agenda they advocate in doing so, viz., that Deut 24 is to be understood casuistically as "authorizing" divorce. This same issue lies just beneath the surface in Matt 5.

Summary and Theological Implications

The implications of this study are far reaching for some current views on the subject.

First, the two accounts (Matt and Mark) are aimed at the Pharisees, not at Moses. Especially in Matt, Jesus is not replacing the law of Moses, but showing how to read it. The Pharisees' abuse of Deut 24:1 to justify divorce is the specific target. Both Gospels emphasize Jesus' conflation of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 as a retort, not to Moses, but to the Pharisees.

Second, the two accounts argue forcefully against approaching Scripture primarily as legislation. The Pharisees would say: "Scripture gives grounds for divorce." Such an approach, both Gospels argue, ignores the larger desires of God's heart. The argument may be paraphrased:

Look at Deuteronomy 24 from where God stands. See his original creative action. He made mankind male and female and established their complete union as his ultimate desire for their relationship. The culmination of that divine action is oneness, not brokenness. God gave Deut 24 as a direct result of human obstinacy. Do not now use it against God! Stop looking for divinely approved grounds for divorce. Look instead for the heart of God.

The heart of God is the central focus. As a result, the final statements, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another," etc., are not to be understood "casuistically"—as new laws or commands, as though they are replacements for Deut 24. To read these statements as giving grounds for divorce, or as showing remarriage to be living in adultery, or to say "once married, always married," not only goes well past the point of the context and imports current concerns back into the biblical text, it also reads the statements of Jesus in the same way the Pharisees read the law of Moses.

Third, the central message of the two accounts is "What God joined, we must stop destroying" (Mark 10:9; Matt 19:6). The uniting of male and female took place at creation and is reenacted in individual marriages. In effect, a marriage relives and reflects the creation event. Divorce and remarriage are not impossible; they are unthinkable. Divorce is never, was never, and never will be the will of God. Whenever divorce occurs, it will always be, as it always has been, the result of the hardness of our hearts. Anything short of faithful marriage relationships is a failure before God and, ultimately, a rejection of his creative act. This much is clear and should be our unequivocal message.

Fourth, the distinctive characteristics of each account provide canonical help in applying the texts to current situations. On the one hand, both accounts give a common and clear message against divorce. But on the other hand, seeing that Matthew and Mark each adapted this message for his audience, we will be closing our eyes to their individual messages if we merely conflate them or if we look at them only through a microscope to find various individual units of tradition. More than that, we will continue to deny ourselves the opportunity to learn how to tell the story to our own, or other, contexts. For as these stories were told with different emphases by each author to make different points for each audience, so their continued application to individual cases will vary from one situation to another. The Christian community should not bide casuistic approaches which seek to derive once-for-all laws to apply to any and every case.

We do, of course, want some practical answers about those who do not live up to the ideal. What do we do in real-life situations? Two answers. First, none of these Gospel accounts on divorce deals with that question. This is a *very* important point because we have traditionally approached these texts as if they give instructions on what to do when people sin. They do not. Second, if we want to know how to deal with people who do not live up to the ideal—who sin, in other words—we should turn to the multitude of other places in Scripture which teach us how to deal with sinners, keeping in mind the difference between sin and sinners. We must preach perfection, as Jesus did,³⁵ but we cannot require it any more than he did.³⁶

³⁵ "Be perfect, as your father in heaven is perfect" Matt 5:48:

³⁶ The moment we wish to require perfection in adherence to Matt 5:31-32 is the moment we should begin to see gouged-out eyes and severed limbs among those requiring it. Those who are willing to cut out the hearts of others by casuistic approaches to the Gospel divorce texts should be willing to cut off their own hands by the same approaches. Otherwise, we should learn the way of Jesus: "But that same servant, as he went out, met one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred days wages. So he grabbed him by the throat and said, 'Pay me what you owe me!' . . . This is how my Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your

In such an enterprise, the Christian community should struggle to become the healing influence it was meant to be, helping people to build faithful marriages, even when they have fallen short of that ideal. Instead of devising ways to constantly remind people what sinners they have been, we must follow the clear teaching of Scripture to reach out to these people and help them become the people they ought to be, building faithful lives and marriages before God, as he intended from the beginning.

In the final analysis, the issue for Jesus was not whether it was divorce or remarriage that caused adultery, nor even whether authorizations could be found for divorce; it was, rather, what creation reveals about God's desires for us as males and females. It is here that we will be able to offer hopeful solutions to the plethora of problems that divorce still presents.

brother from your hearts" (Matt 18:28, 35). On this matter, see Collier, "Jesus as Mentor," chap. 5 in *The Forgotten Treasure*, 61-70.

WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

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A Crisis to Report

At 4:20 on an early Monday morning,¹ Los Angelenos were rudely awakened by a devastating earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale. You have seen pictures of the aftermath: interstates and other highways demolished, bridges and parking garages collapsed, water mains burst, gas lines in flames, thirty lives snuffed out—all in a matter of seconds.

Those are the facts of the situation. But the emotions of the story, the thoughts and the feelings, the reactions of residents and travellers are recounted in the personal reports from eyewitnesses and those who experienced the tragedy firsthand. Richard Goodis of Sherman Oaks, California said, "This place was moving like a jackhammer was going at it. Our bedroom wall tore away. I was looking at the ceiling one moment; then I was looking at the sky. I thought we were dead." Or Phyllis Presbrey, an elderly resident of the Hollywood Plaza Retirement Home: "I was trying to get out of bed, but I couldn't because it was just rocking too much. I was scared, terribly scared."² It is those reactions—from survivors—that make the story real.

In 2 Kings 25:8-12 the facts of Jerusalem's destruction in 587 B.C. are reported. The account reads like an article from the local daily:

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, an official of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. He burned down the house of Yahweh, and the king's house; and all the houses in Jerusalem, including every great man's house, he set on fire and burned. The whole army of the Chaldeans tore down the walls of Jerusalem, all around . . . The rest of the people who were left in the city, and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the populace, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took to Babylon as prisoners. The captain of the guard left only some of the poorest in the country to tend the vines and farm the land.

¹ January 17, 1994.

² *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 18 January 1994, A6.

Those are the facts of the case. But in the book of Lam the meaning behind the facts is revealed. The recollections of survivors, the sense of mourning and loss, the pain and the anguish, the questioning and the doubting—all are expressed in Lam.

In Rom 12:15 Paul instructed Christians: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." Little Janie came into the house and told her mother that her friend Jessica had dropped her doll and broken it. "Did you help her fix it?" Janie's mother asked. "No, we couldn't fix it," Janie replied, "but I did help her cry."

For days following the Los Angeles earthquake, residents helped each other cry, lamenting their losses: family members, businesses, homes, vehicles, friends. During the same week, more than a hundred deaths were attributed to the cold spell that cast its icy chill over the Midwest and Northeast. This was not the first time these things had happened, however, nor will it be the last. Two years ago it was Hurricane Andrew and the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. Last year it was flooding along the Mississippi. A few months ago it was fires in Southern California. Who knows what will happen next?

Because anything is possible, I believe we need to take a close look at the book of Lam to prepare ourselves for what the future may hold. In every situation of loss there is lament. Something about lament, something about situations of loss and crisis, pulls people together and unites them in a powerful bond. Someone has said, "You may soon forget those with whom you have laughed, but you will never forget those with whom you have wept." How true that is!

A Call to Repent

Composed of five poems, Lam is a funeral dirge uttered by both the community and the individual for the fallen city of Jerusalem. As the book of Job addresses the problem of evil and suffering at the personal level, Lam addresses the same problem at the community level. As a result, Lam is very much alive for our day. In an age characterized by upheaval at the community level in countries around the world, the book of Lam speaks to us with a riveting relevance. Why is there so much disorder in Bosnia and Serbia? Why is there terror in Sudan? What is the reason for the continual upheaval in the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States? Why so much chaos in these (supposedly) United States? Why the David Koreshes and incinerated compounds? Why the John Wayne and Lorena Bobbitts and carnival trials on Court TV? Why the conspiracies and hotel-hallway attacks on the Nancy Kerrigans?

I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord." I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

Then comes this dramatic reversal:

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." (3:17-24)

Our son Levi is at the stage of his development in which he is starting what we usually refer to as the "terrible two's" (And some of our friends are taking a perverse pleasure, I think, in watching us try to deal with all that!). We are trying to minimize it by being positive in our approach, calling it the "terrific two's," the "tremendous two's," and every other conceivable thing; but the reality is that this part of the passage from toddlerhood into childhood is difficult. Boundaries are constantly being tested. Frequently Levi oversteps his bounds and has to reap the consequences, either with a spanking or a "timeout." And predictably his response is usually the same. After crying awhile, he will come and (still crying, with tears streaming down his face) want us to pick him up. "Papa! Mama!"

That is what is happening in the book of Lam. With tears streaming down their faces as a result of their rebellion and subsequent punishment by God, the people of Judah run with outstretched arms and cry, "Abba!," Papa, Father. They know that the one who has punished them and brought them to suffering is also the only source of their comfort and protection. Thus the author is able to say,

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him" . . . For people are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

(3:22-24,31-33)

These words of hope and grace resound with a splendor and truth that would be impossible were it not for the darkness through which their author had only recently passed. Only because he has passed through the crucible of suffering and the passageway of pain can he speak with such passion and power. Only those who have suffered deeply can praise God greatly. C. S. Lewis once said, "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, and shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."³ That is what my friend Freddie Garza

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 81.

must have meant when he prayed, shortly before his death and in the midst of his pain, "God, I thank you for my cancer because, before it came, I never really knew you."

Sometimes pain comes upon us by chance, simply as a by-product of the kind of fallen world we live in. At other times pain comes upon us as a result of our own decisions and personal choices, as it did with the people of Jeremiah's day in their rebellion against God. But whatever the cause of our pain, whether random chance or the result of our own choosing, the answer of Lam is that God is faithful. He is our portion and the source of our hope. Therefore we will wait for him. Whether it be in the aftermath of an earthquake in L.A., a snowbound home in Maine, or hospital emergency room, or criminal court in our own community, we will wait for him. For he is faithful.

WHO WAS A JEW? JEWISH ETHNICITY DURING THE ACHAEMENID PERIOD

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Introduction

What defines a Jew? The question of Jewish identity is one of the most interesting and provocative "ethnic" problems of the past three millennia. Concern with the question has come both from within and without the Jewish community. Outsiders have been concerned with protecting themselves from Jews; this is true whether one thinks of Nazi descent laws, medieval Christian conversion of Jews, or the exclusionary laws of Claudius. Insiders have been equally concerned with the question, although for different and (usually) more benign reasons. For the historian interested in the nature of ethnicity, Jewishness presents a rare opportunity to study the phenomenon over a very long time span and in various environments. Such a person asks how Jewishness was expressed in the past (and perhaps how it might be again); the question remains: "Who was (or is) a Jew?"

To address this question, two kinds of sensitivity are necessary. The first is temporal. Put simply, the nature of Jewishness varied from time to time and place to place. Thus Jews could also be Christians during the first century C.E., but not during the third.¹ The second kind of sensitivity is methodological. Historical analysis must account for the variety of detail found "on the ground." The ethnic label "Jew" does not lend itself to an essentialist definition but is best seen as "a series of nesting dichotomizations of inclusiveness and exclusiveness."² This means both that no single characteristic infallibly identifies a person or group as Jewish and that ethnicity is circumstantial (it can be turned on and off).

¹ Cf. L. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew?* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985).

² R. Cohen, "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus in Anthropology," *American Review of Anthropology* 7 (1978) 387.

The Nature of the Evidence

This paper seeks, first of all, to study Jewish identity during a specific period of time—the Achaemenid Era (ca. 539-332 B.C.E.). This period was chosen because it is much less well known than Iron II and the Hellenistic period, which precede and follow it, and because it was under the Persians that “Jew” changed from a primarily sociopolitical term to a primarily religious one. Coincidentally, ethnic identity was a major concern in the literature of the period.

Sources related to Jewish identity during the Achaemenid period are mostly literary. Although archaeological surveys of Palestinian sites reveal a great deal about the life of a growing population,³ it is difficult to draw boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish populations on the basis of material remains alone. Moreover, archaeological knowledge of Jewish sites outside Palestine is very poor. For example, excavation of the Persian-era stratum at Elephantine, begun by the French under Napoleon, was completely unscientific and left no reliable records. (The excavations for earlier and later strata are much better and were conducted during the 1960s and 1970s under the auspices of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.)⁴ This study will rely very heavily on literary evidence. This is admittedly a shortcoming but one that can hardly be avoided.

The literary evidence for Jews under Persian rule is diverse. It includes prophetic (Hag, Zech) and historiographical (Ezra-Neh, Chron) texts in the Bible, as well as Aramaic contracts, letters, and accounting ledgers from Elephantine and OadAl ed-Daliyeh,⁵ coins and jar seals from many

³ See, e.g., A. Zertal, “The Pahwah of Samaria (Northern Israel) During the Persian Period. Types of Settlement, Economy, History and New Discoveries,” *Transeuphratène* 3 (1990) 9-30; J. Briand, “L’occupation de la Galilée occidentale à l’époque perse,” *Transeuphratène* 2 (1990) 109-123; E. Stern, “The Dor Province in the Persian Period in the Light of Recent Excavations at Dor,” *Transeuphratène* 2 (1990) 147-55.

⁴ Cf. M. Heltzer, “A Recently Published Babylonian Tablet and the Province of Judah after 516 B.C.E.,” *Transeuphratène* 5 (1992) 57-61.

⁵ Aramaic texts related to Jews come from two locales. (1) The Elephantine papyri from Egypt were published in several stages beginning around the turn of the century. The important editions include E. Bresciani and M. Kamil, eds., “Le lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli,” *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*. Series VIII, 12 (1966) 356-428 (the authors of these texts were Aramaeans, not Jews); A. E. Cowley, ed., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (repr. Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1967); ed. E. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); and B. Porten and J. C. Greenfield, eds., *Jews of Elephantine and Aramaeans of Syene: Aramaic Texts with Translation* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1974). Texts are cited by their number in one of the first three editions (e.g., Cowley 32). (2) Frank Cross began purchasing the Samaria papyri in the antiquities markets in 1961. See Cross, “The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri,” *BA* 26 (1963) 110-21; also his “Aspects of Samaritan and Jewish History in Late Persian and Hellenistic Times,” *HTR* 59

Palestinian sites, and Akkadian business records from Nippur and elsewhere.⁶ Jews filled different social and economic niches, from mercenary to banker to imperial administrator. It would be impossible to discuss all of this material in a short paper; therefore, I will focus on only the two most instructive corpora, the Bible and the Elephantine papyri.

Characteristics of Ethnicity

After the material to be studied has been identified, how should one study it? In several seminal publications the Danish anthropologist Fredrik Barth has pointed out that ethnicity expresses itself most clearly at the boundaries;⁷ that is, one can spot a Jew (for example) when he or she is dealing with non-Jews. Since no ethnos is an island (with apologies to John Donne), ethnic character is shaped by its social and ecological boundaries. It will become clear in this paper that the boundaries of ethnicity do indeed provide information about ethnic identity. Ezra-Neh and the Elephantine papyri portray the conflict and compromise with other ethnic groups that shaped Jewishness.

Nevertheless, one should note that it is not enough to look at boundaries. Ethnic groups are most conscious of their own identity at points of conflict with outsiders, yet contact, whether strained or amicable, does not create the feeling of belonging which ethnics experience. The core of ethnicity, although changing constantly in minor and major ways, is as important as the boundaries. Often, as was the case in both Judea and Elephantine, part of that core is the shared beliefs and resultant practices of the group, i.e., its ideology. Certainly religious ideology was crucial to Jewish identity during the Achaemenid period, even if by religion different persons meant different things. The trick is to discover how religion shaped ethnic identity and vice versa. Therefore, this study must ask some questions about what Clifford Geertz calls the sociology of meaning.⁸ The following pages will explore these and other questions.

(1966) 201-211; D. Gropp published half of the texts in *The Samaria Papyri from Wâdi ed-Dâliyah: The Slave Sales* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1986). He is currently working on a complete edition.

⁶ See Michael Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire: The Murasu Archive, the Murasu Firm and the Persian Empire* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1985).

⁷ *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. F. Barth; Boston: Little, Brown) 9-38, and F. Barth, *Features of Person and Society in Swat: Collected Essays on Pathans* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 93-102.

⁸ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 212. By ideology, I mean simply the radical commitment to a set of ideas and the changing of one's life

The Jews of Elephantine

The publication of the Elephantine papyri (and ostraca) during the first decades of this century provoked a considerable stir in scholarly circles. The papyri portrayed a Jewish military colony unlike anything seen in the Bible. The Yahwism of the group seemed unorthodox, a confirmation of the scholarly hypothesis that the homogeneous theology of the Bible camouflaged a more diverse religion in Israel.

Much of this early scholarly euphoria was justified. Elephantine was different. But how different, and why? Those are the questions I would like to address.

To begin, the Jewish community was part of a larger Aramaic-speaking, multiethnic garrison stationed at the First Cataract to guard the Nubian frontier. This region had been the border of Egypt since the Old Kingdom⁹ and continued as a military center into the Roman era, when it was the home base of Legio I.¹⁰ According to Herodotus (ii, 30),¹¹ the foreign garrison dated back to the time of Psammetichus (mid-seventh century B.C.E.).¹² The garrison probably perished during the Egyptian wars of independence at the end of the fifth century B.C.E.

An interesting aspect of Herodotus' note is that he labelled the group "Persians." He wrote, Καὶ γὰρ ἐν Ἐλεφαντίνῃ Πέρσαι φρουρούσι. This is not, of course, a claim that the garrison was ethnically Persian (the commanders probably were; witness the names Varyazata, Vidranga, but Nabukudurri). Rather, Herodotus is saying that the soldiers were not Egyptian. He does not call them Jews.

However, in his discussion of circumcision (ii, 104), Herodotus asserts that the Syrians of Palestine (Σύροι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ) also circumcised. He distinguishes this ethnic group from Egyptians, Colchians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians, and Σύροι δὲ ἅ περὶ θερμώδοντα καὶ ποταμὸν Παρθέλιον. Who are these "Syrians of Palestine," if not Jews and perhaps other

to follow them. Religion is a kind of ideology, though not the only one. While "ideology" is a loaded term, it is still useful. Cf. Geertz, *Interpretation*, 213-33.

⁹ F. Junge, *Elephantine XI: Funde und Bauteile* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1987).

¹⁰ H. Jaretz, *Elephantine III: Die Terrassen von den Tempeln des Chnum und der Satet* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1980); G. Dreyer, *Elephantine VIII: Der Tempel der Satet* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1986).

¹¹ Herodotus, *Works*, (ed. and trans. A. D. Godley. [LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981]).

¹² His information about Elephantine is sometimes absurd, as when he repeats the rumor that the Nile begins here in a bottomless well and flows in two directions. To his credit, he admits skepticism of that rumor. As for ii, 30, it may be that the Persians took over the old Egyptian military arrangements in toto. Psammetichus was the last of the powerful pharaohs and so was noteworthy enough to attract Herodotus' attention.

Aramaic-speakers of the area? For Herodotus, and perhaps for his sources, the Jews were Aramaeans because of their language.¹³

This brings the discussion to Elephantine, where the language was Aramaic and where constant contact between Jews and Aramaeans existed. How did the two groups distinguish themselves from each other and from other groups? The Elephantine papyri provide some intriguing bits of evidence.

The Boundaries of Jewishness

The papyri illustrate the boundaries of Jewishness in several ways. First, they show where the boundaries were not. They were only partially linguistic (so also Herodotus), at least insofar as Jews could be distinguished from Aramaeans and probably other members of the garrison. They were not at the level of the family, for intermarriage was possible, even if we cannot tell how frequent it was (Cowley 15; Kraeling 2). They were not at the level of business, for interethnic business was common. They were not embedded in law, for the business papyri are formally similar to other Aramaic and even Mesopotamian texts of the same time period.¹⁴ They were not at the level of settlement patterns, for Jews and non-Jews lived cheek-by-jowl in Elephantine (Kraeling 3, 4).¹⁵ And they were not completely at the level of ideas, for Jewish reading material apparently included the wisdom tale of Ahiqar, which contains references to non-Jewish deities.

Second, however, the papyri do hint at where the boundaries were. The major issues which distinguished Jews from non-Jews were religion and occupation. This was particularly important in distinguishing Jews from Egyptians. The following paragraph will discuss these two ethnic boundaries. Religion as a boundary of ethnicity

Eight letters are extant from the communal archives (or Jedaniah archives). They show a steady escalation of tension during the last decade of the fifth century between the Jewish community and the Khnum priesthood on Elephantine. The Yahweh priests Jedaniah and Uriah are said to know that "Khnum, he has been against us from the time Jedaniah was in Egypt until

¹³ Herodotus also notes in vii, 89, that the Phoenicians and Syrians of Palestine furnished triremes to the Persian navy. The Syrians are here the inhabitants of the coastal cities, which were under Phoenician influence or perhaps control (cf. J. Elayi, "Studies in Phoenician Geography During the Persian Period," *JNES* 41 [1982] 83-110). As Jonah 1 indicates, Jews during this period often saw themselves as connected to the coastal ports.

¹⁴ Cf. Y. Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine* (Leiden: Brill, 1969); Gropp, *Papyri*.

¹⁵ Cf. B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) 270-75.

now" (ḥnwm hw ʿlyn mn zy ḥnnyh bmgryn ʿd k ʿn [Cowley 38:7b]). This hostility culminated in the destruction of the Yahweh temple.

At first, this seems like a simple case of interethnic tension. Despite the protests of innocence lodged by the Jews in Cowley 30 and 31, there is a possible explanation for why Egyptians might have felt threatened by the Yahweh temple. Elephantine had been sacred to a series of deities since at least the third dynasty;¹⁶ one of these was Khnum.¹⁷ The presence of a foreign deity might have created some ill feeling, but compounding the mischief was the fact that the temple was sponsored by a community of mercenaries. At a time of Egyptian nationalism, the temple may have seemed like an insult to Egypt itself. One could understand the destruction as an episode in the mounting unrest which led to Egyptian independence ca. 403 B.C.E.¹⁸

However, according to Cowley 31:5, the Persian commander, or *frataraka*, connived with the Egyptian troops to demolish the Yahweh temple. Interestingly, the earlier draft of the letter did not mention a bribe, but had Vidranga attacking the temple without any motivation (Cowley 30:5-6). The added detail in the revised letter is important because it explains the otherwise inexplicable attack by a garrison commander upon his own subordinates. But is the explanation reasonable? Certainly we have no way of confirming its accuracy. Yet it is interesting that the first draft did not mention the bribe. In any case, the important point may be what follows in both letters, viz., a note to the effect that the Persian government had always protected the Yahweh temple, even when Cambyses had destroyed Egyptian temples in the same area (Cowley 30:13; cf. 31:12-13). The appeal to the readers of the letter (the governors of Judea and Samaria) was an appeal to imperial protection.

And this may ultimately explain the tension between Jews and Egyptians, on the one hand, and Jews and a renegade garrison commander on the other. The Jewish community saw itself as being under the direct protection of the central government, and they appealed to the most powerful Jews they knew. This must certainly have irked both Egyptians and Persian superiors. It also indicates how closely Jews could unite together when facing danger from outside their community.

¹⁶ H. Jaretz, *Elephantine III*.

¹⁷ F. Junge, *Elephantine XI*, 43.

¹⁸ On the revolt, see M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire* (trans. W. J. Vogelsang; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 270-73; E. Stern, "The Persian Empire and the Political and Social History of Palestine in the Persian Period" in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (ed. W. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 1:70-87.

Naming as a boundary behavior

One final item deserves mention. In several legal papyri the party involved is identified as a Jew or an Aramaean. Normally, the title is "Jew of Elephantine" or "Aramaean of Syene" (Syene being a town on the east bank of the Nile opposite Elephantine Island). However, "Aramaean of Elephantine" appears occasionally (Cowley 25:2, 35:2; Kraeling 7:1, 12:2, 14:2), and "Jew of Syene" once (Kraeling 11:2). The purpose of this naming is unclear. It occurs only in the introductions of a legal contract, never in the list of witnesses, even when the names in the list are of different linguistic origins. And this naming formula occurs only at Elephantine, being absent from the Samaria papyri.¹⁹ It should be seen, therefore, as a local phenomenon, and not as a normal feature of Aramaic law.²⁰ Superficially, one might see the ethnic identities as related to the defension clause ("if I or my descendants renege, then penalties accrue"), but since this clause is also in the Samaria papyri, this explanation is unlikely.

A more likely possibility is that, in a multiethnic community like Elephantine/Syene, ethnic differentiation was important. The question is why it was important. Frankly, I have no answer at this time. Further study is needed.

One area that is more sure, however, is the multivalency of the ethnic identities. Ethnic labels could change. The variable controlling change was the location of the individual's residence. For example, Mahseiah bar Jedaniah was called an Aramaean of Syene in 471 B.C.E. (Cowley 5:1), a Jew of Elephantine in the 460s and 450s (Cowley 6:2-4, 8:1-2, 9:2), and an Aramaean of Syene again in the 440s (Cowley 13:1, 14:3, 15:2). Similarly, Meshullam bar Zaccur was an Aramaean of Syene (Cowley 13:1; Kraeling 7:2) and a Jew of Elephantine (Kraeling 2:2, 5:2). In other words, location was an indicator of ethnic identity, at least sometimes. Interestingly, though, one Anani bar Haggai was an Aramaean of Elephantine (Kraeling 12:2-3) and a Jew of Syene (Kraeling 11:2); it is almost as if neither community wished to claim him. All of this seems to mean that ethnic communities overlapped in the Persian garrison. Location influenced ethnic identity, but not in a rigorously predictable way. The boundary between Aramaeans and Jews existed but was porous.

¹⁹ Gropp, *Papyri*.

²⁰ Even Muffs, *Studies*, does not discuss this issue, despite the heavy dependence of his work on the Elephantine papyri.

The Core of Jewishness

If two of the boundaries of Jewishness were worship of Yahweh (whatever that meant at Elephantine) and attachment to the Persian *imperium*, the core of Jewishness was also both religious and identificatory. Frequently, the two elements intertwined. The following paragraphs will examine each element in turn.

Religion as an ethnic behavior

This intertwining appears in the so-called "Passover Letter" (Cowley 21), dating from 419 B.C.E. The letter is by one Hananiah (cf. Cowley 38:7), an emissary of Darius II who orders the Jewish garrison to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread.²¹ Keeping the feast was apparently felt to be a mark of proper Jewish behavior. It is interesting, but not surprising, that the Persian government was interested in Hananiah's work. Support of religious unity within ethnic groups was an important part of Persian domestic policy, as the careers of Ezra and the Egyptian scribe and reformer Udjahorresnet indicate.²² It is impossible to know whether the Elephantine Jews had observed the feast before. Some scholars assume that they had not, but the fact that the "Passover Letter" gives only the briefest instructions as to keeping the feast (no leaven in houses) may imply that they had.²³

Keeping Passover is only one manifestation of religious life. At least two others deserve mention. First, the Yahweh temple was important to the life of the community. When the Egyptians wished to attack the Jews, they burned their temple.

The Yahweh temple was the center of community activities. Cowley 22 is a list of names (and patronymics) and their contributions to "Yahweh the God." Dated to "year 5," the tally was executed either in 400²⁴ or, more likely, 419 B.C.E.²⁵ If the earlier date is correct, it is possible that the

²¹ Porten, *Archives*, 130, tries to identify this Hananiah with the governor of Judea after Nehemiah. However, Cowley 21:3 traces the authority for the decree via Arsames, satrap of Egypt, to Darius. Why would a local governor in Ebir Nari refer to the satrap of Egypt as his authority? Porten is more likely correct when he sees this Hananiah as an emissary of Darius II or a member of Arsames's staff (280). Arsames seems to have been a protector of the Elephantine Jews, who in turn vindicate him of knowledge of the plot against them (Cowley 30:4, 31:29).

²² See the excellent discussion of Persian ethnic policy and its role in Ezra's and Nehemiah's activities in K. Hoglund, *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah*, SBL Dissertation Series, 125 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992).

²³ Porten, *Archives*, 131-33.

²⁴ Porten and Greenfield, *Jews of Elephantine*, 135.

²⁵ The papyri date formula is typically "in year X of PN." The absence of a royal name might imply a date from Egyptian independence. However, this is unlikely, not only because one would then expect a Pharaoh's name, but also because the Elephantine Jews could hardly have

collection was part of a religious revival instigated by Hananiah. Whether or not this is correct, it is interesting that the total amount of money was divided among Yahweh, Eshembethel, and Anathbethel, the last two apparently being manifestations of the Aramaean god Bethel (cf. Bresciani-Kamil 4).²⁶ How is this to be explained?

Interpreting this fact has generally revolved around the question of Jewish syncretism. It is difficult to deny that the Jewish community sought to contribute to the worship of Eshembethel and Anathbethel. At the same time, it begs the question to describe this contribution as syncretism: One can speak of syncretism only if the elements syncretized are known, and Elephantine Judaism is not a known datum. Therefore, one should try to seek an explanation for the worship of Yahweh and other deities by some other means.

To do that, I would point out two facts about Cowley 22. First, the names are arranged by century (m't), followed by the name of a commander. The commanders have non-Jewish names (e.g., Siniddin, Nabuaqad). Apparently, these centuries are subsets of the military *daglin* referred to throughout the papyri. Second, and related, some of the contributors' names in the list are non-Jewish (e.g., Hori [22:38], Bagaphernes and Vashi [22:131, 132]). Names of fathers and grandfathers are still more likely to be non-Jewish. Or rather, one should say that they are non-Yahwistic. There is no reason that Jews could not have had foreign names, and foreigners Jewish names, especially when intermarriage occurred as it did at Elephantine.²⁷ What does all of this say about religion as a core behavior of Jews at Elephantine? Simply this: Yahwism was a given for the group, and membership in the group was linked to worship of Yahweh. Outsiders could enter the group, perhaps through intermarriage, as long as they participated in this worship. Yahwism at Elephantine did not exclude worship of other deities, and the Jews shared Eshembethel and Anathbethel with their Aramaean neighbors. There is no evidence that this money was intended for temples outside Elephantine, so it is likely that originally Aramaean elements had entered Yahwism on the island. But the history of the cult is less

been accepting of an Egyptian overlord (cf. Cowley, *Papyri*, 66). I doubt whether the colony survived into the fourth century.

²⁶ Cf. Bresciani-Kamil 4; Porten, *Archives*, 170-71.

²⁷ This fact alone renders very questionable studies like that of M. Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, AOAT, 217 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1985). Trying to discern religious values from names is hazardous, especially when (1) many of the names are traditional and (2) papponymy (the practice of naming children for their grandfathers) and intermarriage coexist.

important for ethnic studies than the fact that the community's definition of its religion was different from what became the biblical norm.

This, though, raises a question. In the correspondence between Elephantine and Judea, the worship of Aramaean deities never arises. Cowley 32 implies Judean approval for the rebuilding of the Elephantine temple and the resumption of the grain and incense offerings (32:9). Since the Judeans are unlikely to have approved of the worship of Aramaean deities, this approval means either that they were unaware of the "syncretism" of Elephantine, or that the Aramaic deities were an insignificant portion of the Elephantine cult. There is no way to tell for sure.

Finally, what is certain is that religious identity was an important feature of the core of Jewish ethnicity at Elephantine. The fact that the soldiers there appealed to fellow Jews in Judea and Samaria (Cowley 31:28) for help in a religious matter indicates the importance of shared religious identity. In a purely civil matter, appeal to local Persian authority would have sufficed. Appealing to the ethnic center(s) was more than a case of political string-pulling; it was also an act of self-identification.

Summary

To conclude this section, one should note several implications of the evidence studied. First, the Elephantine Jews were part of a larger ethnic continuum in their area. Second, their niche jostled with other niches for survival in the continuum. Third, the identity of the Jews was part and parcel of a larger ethnic identity, even if Elephantine was quite different from other Jewish groups. Fourth, the politics of the time greatly influenced ethnic identity because of the specialized economic activities of the Jews (as mercenaries). The declining fortunes of Persia meant hardship for her supporters. Elephantine Jews, then, were a quite distinctive brand of their ethnos.

Jewishness in Judea

Turning to Judea, the first thing which strikes me as important is the contrast between this region and Elephantine. Elephantine was at the periphery of the Jewish community. Judea, together with Samaria,²⁸ was at its

²⁸ It is impossible to speak of Jerusalem as the center during this period. Certainly the Bible so portrays it, but then the Bible was put together in Judean circles during this period. It does not make sense to say (with Schur, *History of the Samaritans*, Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums, 18 [Frankfurt: Lang, 1989] 30) that "Jerusalem was the center of the diffusion of . . . new ideas." Too little is known about Samaria to make such a blanket statement. See F. M. Cross, "Aspects of Samaritan and Jewish History in Late Persian and Hellenistic Times," *HTR* 59 (1966) 201-211.

center. Elephantine Jews were socially and economically specialized and isolated from the Egyptian population around them. Judean Jews were socially and economically diverse and increasingly dominant in their region. The Elephantine community was apparently egalitarian, while that in Judea was more stratified.²⁹ However, contrast is not the only *Leitmotif* of the material to be studied. There are also similarities, as will become clear.

To examine Jewishness in Judea, I will focus on Ezra-Neh. This is a purely strategic move: Including other biblical texts from the same time period (when they can be dated) would complicate the analysis by introducing data that can describe ethnicity only when placed in the context of the material of Ezra-Neh. Moreover, the latter book provides several interesting examples of ethnicity at work. As before, the procedure will be to examine (1) the boundaries and (2) the core of ethnicity.

The Boundaries of Ethnicity

Several kinds of behavior delineated Judean Jews from other ethnoi. These include (1) marriage practices, (2) relationship to the central authority, and (3) the use of language. Each will receive attention in the following paragraphs.

Marriage practices

One of the more shocking episodes in Ezra-Neh is Ezra's enforcement of the ban on intermarriage. According to Ezra 9, some Jewish men had married Ammonite and Moabite wives. With a few exceptions (Ezra 10:15, but what about the husbands?), everyone agreed with Ezra that intermarriage was certain to provoke divine wrath. Therefore, the heads of extended families were to see to it that divorces took place promptly.

The way in which this episode is told is interesting at several points. First, Ezra persuades his audience by a prayer which seems to reflect Deuteronomic theology.³⁰ The prayer depicts intermarriage as revolt against Yahweh. At stake here is not simply marriage of foreign wives, but also of foreign husbands (Ezra 9:15; cf. Neh. 10:31). In other words, the rule against intermarriage does not assume that a Jew is the offspring of a Jewish woman.

²⁹ Exaggeratedly, H. Kippenberg, *Religion und Klassenbildung in antike Judäa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978) 76-77; B. Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century B.C.E.: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," in B. Halpern and D. Hobson, eds., *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, *JSOT* 124 (11-107) (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), has shown that extended families collapsed during Hezekiah's reign under Assyrian military pressures as the population was concentrated in Jerusalem. Whether this social change originated individual moral liability is not clear. The Levitical sacrificial system assumes such individual moral liability; the question of its age thus comes into play here.

³⁰ J. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, A B 14 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965) 76.

Rather, a Jew has two Jewish parents. Second, Ezra 10:18-44 lists the men who had married foreign women. Commentators have examined the structure of the list and have asked why it includes only men's names.³¹ But a very important question has gone largely unasked: Why does the redactor of Ezra-Neh include the list at all? Was it perhaps to insure that the community did not accept the offspring of miscegenation? Third, the redactor never asks what happened to the divorced wives and their children. There is no indication that dowries were returned or fines for divorce paid. Indeed, one has the impression that the whole proceeding was highly irregular in terms of Near Eastern law.³² His concern is with the purity of the community and the maintenance of its boundaries.

A final point on marriage is in order. Some parts of the Jewish community obviously did not share Ezra's extreme views. Ezra 9:15 records the names of a few dissenters, but it is hard to believe that the husbands affected did not dissent. This case is an interesting example of ideology at work in controlling the boundaries of ethnicity.

Relationship with the central government

Along with the mass divorce, one of the more obvious features of Ezra-Neh is the repeated references to the Persian government. The central authority is behind the reconstruction of the temple, the legal reforms of Ezra,³³ and the fortification of Jerusalem. An especially relevant pericope is Ezra 4:1-5, set in the early post-exilic period. According to this story, the inhabitants of Judea sought to help the exiles rebuild the temple. The former claimed the right to build based on the fact that they had worshipped Yahweh since the mid-seventh century. Zerubbabel refused, arguing that their claim was invalid. Certainly the narrator implies that the inhabitants of Judah and Benjamin, because they were not really part of the autochthonous population, were not Jews. However, the interesting point is that Zerubbabel does not appeal directly to that fact, but says,

For we alone will build for Yahweh the God of Israel
just as King Cyrus, king of Persia, commanded us . . .
[emphasis mine, MWH]

³¹ Cf. L. Batten, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, ICC (New York: Scribner's, 1913) 351; Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 87. I would argue that it contained only men's names because in a patrilineal society, the intermarrying women were beyond the control of the community leaders.

³² But see E. Lipinski, "Marriage and Divorce in the Judaism of the Persian Period," *Transeuphratène* 4 (1991) 63-71, who in my opinion squeezes the biblical text into an Aramaic-legal mold.

³³ J. Blenkinsopp, "The Mission of Udjahorresnet and Those of Ezra and Nehemiah" *JBL* 106 (1987) 409-421.

In one way, this answer is an evasion. But at a more important level, it shows that the exiles were claiming to be the true Jews because (in part) the Persians said they were.

It is not clear how important this pan-Persianism was in the earliest post-exilic community. If Hag 2:20-23 is any indication, nationalistic pretensions died hard. But these ideas did apparently die out as Persian rule solidified and its beneficent effects began to be felt. It seems to me, then, that the redactor of Ezra-Neh argues for Jewish support of the Persians throughout the book by including various imperial letters. Scholars increasingly believe that these letters are basically genuine.³⁴ The letters show, and the redactor apparently believed, that the Persian government favored a pro-Jewish policy in Palestine.

Language as an ethnic boundary

The Aramaic letters in Ezra-Neh, combined with the fact that the Wâdi ed-Dâliyeh papyri are also in Aramaic, show that Aramaic was very widely understood and spoken in Palestine during the Achaemenid period. In fact, it may have been more widely spoken even than the local Canaanite dialects, including Hebrew. Therefore, I would like to suggest tentatively that the use of Hebrew in the post-exilic books of the Bible was itself a conscious act of establishing ethnic boundaries. The use of Hebrew allowed one to assert one's Jewishness simply by speaking. Such a hypothesis is hard to prove, but certainly not without precedent. One need think only of the revival of Hebrew script by Bar Kochba or the rebirth of local languages such as Catalan and Provençal in modern Europe to note the power of language in strengthening group identity. Again, this is just a hypothesis, but one well worth investigating more than can be done here.

The Core of Ethnicity

So far, this paper has shown that the boundaries of ethnicity in Judea were quite different from those at Elephantine. Yet the core of Jewishness at both places was similar. In Judea, as at Elephantine, Jewishness was, first of all, seen in religion. Thus the community cooperated to build a temple and then a wall which, whatever its significance as a defense in the increasingly unstable region, Nehemiah saw as a testament to piety. Second, ethnicity was a matter of descent in a way not possible at Elephantine. Let us examine each of these features.

³⁴ Contra, e.g., C. C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (ed. Harry Orlinsky; New York: KTAV, 1970). However, I would argue that the reference to the satrapy of Ebir Nari ("Across the River") in Ezra 5 is anachronistic, since the satrapy dates only from the time of Xerxes.

Religion

To assess the religious dimension of Jewishness in Judah during this period would merit a very large book such as that by Peter Ackroyd.³⁵ At this point, I would like to note only one text. Neh 10:28-39 is not from the memoirs of Neh, but probably is older than the material surrounding it.³⁶ This pericope is a "covenant" in which the ethnically cleansed Jews of Jerusalem agree to support their religion by (1) avoiding miscegenation, (2) keeping the Sabbath, holidays, and the Sabbath Year, (3) paying the temple tax, and (4) making appropriate sacrifices. Although the first two items are defined in part by contrasting Jewish with non-Jewish behavior, one is justified in seeing this pericope as a reflection of the core religious values of the group. That the covenant is the product of an enormous amount of religious reflection is indicated by the reference to previously written (?) Scripture in verse 35, by careful distinction between Levites and priests, and by the meticulous listing of temple servitors in verse 39. This text was apparently intended to describe succinctly the Jewish religion in Judea.

With the exception of the prohibition of intermarriage, this covenant would have been acceptable to the Elephantine Jews, as well. Yet the covenant masks real conflict within the Judean community over the nature of the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-22), intermarriage, and possibly the distinction between priests and Levites. The community managed to contain that conflict by investing in its religious institutions considerable power (cf. the picture of the priesthood and the Davidic scion in Zech 1-2 and Hag). Without this ideological underpinning, it is doubtful that the re-creation of the Jewish ethnos would have been possible.

Descent

The importance of religion is due to its ability to influence even the most basic human behaviors, including prominently the nature of the family. Ezra-Neh contains a number of genealogical lists purporting to be a census of the returning exiles. For onomastic and demographic studies, these lists are invaluable. But the question remains, Why are such lists important to a community, including the later redactor of the book? One clue appears in Ezra 2:61-63 (= Neh 7:63-65), a note to the effect that the priestly genealogy did not include the descendants of Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai. These persons believed themselves to be, and were believed by others to be, priests. Yet since their names were not in the authoritative genealogy, they could not

³⁵ Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968).

³⁶ U. Kellermann, *Nehemia Quellen Überlieferung und Geschichte* (Berlin: Topelmann, 1967) 40.

function in the role. The genealogy did not indicate Jewishness, but priestly status. A second clue is found in the fact that the genealogies are concerned with tracing lineages back to monarchic times. Throughout Ezra-Neh, there is a concern with reestablishing extended families. Thus the heads of families were to organize divorces. The enemies are said to come to Zerubbabel and the *ra šē ha āhōt*. Also, Neh 12:12-21 preserves a list of family heads from the time of Jehoiakim.

What is the point of this obsession with descent? In a brilliant study Baruch Halpern has argued that Hezekiah obliterated the old lineage structure by concentrating the Judahite population in Jerusalem and a few other centers.³⁷ This concentration of population was a defensive move designed to save the nation in the face of Assyrian depredations. I would argue, conversely, that refocussing attention on the lineages and scattering them over the landscape was an offensive move on the part of the Jewish community designed to reassert its control over the hill country around Jerusalem. This policy apparently enjoyed Persian encouragement, not surprisingly in view of the great loyalty felt by the Jews for their liberating overlords. More importantly, the policy of the community allowed them to view themselves as recreating pre-exilic Judah. Note that the aforementioned list of priestly headsmen dates from the reign of Jehoiakim, the last completely legitimate Davidic king. Core ethnic behavior meant a reassertion of what was believed by the ethnos to be its true historical identity.

Summary

To summarize this section, Jewishness in Judea had its own particular flavor, shaped not only by contact with local ethnoi, but also by intraethnic ideology (religion) and extraethnic ideology (the ideal of a Persian empire). Yet at the core lay very definite religion beliefs shaped by the literature inherited from the monarchic past, but reconfigured by the realities of a new era.

Concluding Reflections

This brief comparison of ethnicity in a core and peripheral area of the life of an ethnos during a fairly compressed period of time has allowed a few reflections on the nature of ethnicity in general and Jewishness in particular.

This study has confirmed the notion that ethnic identity is not a fixed datum, but rather a complex series of interlocking characteristics. It has also become clearer that the boundaries of ethnicity are shaped to some extent by

³⁷ Halpern, "Lineages."

environment, occupational specialization or diversification, and interaction with outsiders. Yet an ethnic group has its own inner logic shaped by ideology and the game of family and community life, as Barth might put it. The core influences the periphery of ethnic existence, and the periphery influences the core.

What does all of this tell one about Jews and Judaism? Max Weber argued that Jews in this period were a pariah people, that they, as Freddy Raphael puts it, "mit der Luft, die sie atmen, bring[en] rituelle Verunreinigung mit sich."³⁸ But this is an oversimplification. The Jews at Elephantine may have been a pariah people from the perspective of the Egyptians; yet they were not from the Persian point of view. They were keepers of the peace. And the people of the Ezra-Neh community were hacking out their own little utopia, coexisting uneasily with peoples who wished to bury them. They were struggling not to be strangers in a strange land. Weber perhaps missed the point.

Finally, this paper has addressed an ageless question. May the few answers provided bring honor to those who have asked it before.

³⁸ F. Raphael, "Die Juden als Gastvolk im Werk Max Webers," in *Max Webers Studie über das antike Judentum Interpretation und Kritik* (ed. W. Schlachter; Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981) 225.

BOOK REVIEWS

The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. Edited by EPHRAIM STERN. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993. 4 vols. xxiv + 1552 pp. \$355 (\$375 after 4-1-95).

As *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (NEAEHL)* demonstrates, archaeology has become a formidable enterprise. The *NEAEHL* is a much needed revision of Stern's earlier work, which was issued 1975-1978 (both English editions were revisions of Hebrew editions). Stern has assembled articles summarizing the majority of excavations in the modern land of Israel and the West Bank. Most of the articles are written by the excavation directors, or upper-level staff for sites whose directors have passed away (e.g., Arad, Beersheba). For some sites which were excavated years ago for which no additional excavation has been done, articles from the earlier edition of the encyclopedia have occasionally been reissued.

The articles follow a general organizational pattern. The locations of the sites are provided according to map coordinates (maps are located inside the front and back covers of each volume). The authors discuss any literary or inscriptional sources that might help identify the sites. A history of investigation lists earlier explorers, references to sponsoring expeditions, and the dates of their work. Most entries report findings from the earlier periods progressing to more recent periods. Bibliographies list the main excavation reports, which are followed by additional studies of the finds and other matters of interest.

While the bulk of the encyclopedia deals with site reports, topical articles occasionally appear through the volumes. The determination of which subjects to include as topical articles seems inconsistent. For instance, an article appears on "Early Churches," but there is not one on "Temples."

Numerous black-and-white photographs and drawings illustrate the reports. Several color photographs appear, but they usually do not appear with the articles that they illustrate. Volume four contains chronological charts and lists of kings for surrounding countries and empires, as well as for the kings of Israel and Judah. The *NEAEHL* also includes a chart of the development of the alphabet, a glossary, and indices (by name of site) for people, places, and Bible references.

The *NEAEHL* brings together in a convenient collection a mass of material which is scattered through numerous, more specialized publications.

For some sites, the *NEAEHL* offers the only reports to be found in English. The Bible student who wishes seriously to integrate archaeology into Bible study will find the reports in the *NEAEHL* indispensable, but must expect to encounter numerous sites that bear no direct relationship to the Bible (e.g., prehistoric and Byzantine sites). Furthermore, while there are reports on some sites in Jordan, their numbers are limited, and sites from Syria and Lebanon are essentially nonexistent (which probably derives from the political tensions of the area).

The lack of excavation reports from the surrounding countries demonstrates the inadequacy of the title of Stern's work. "Holy Land" becomes a somewhat parochial term limited to the geographic equivalent of modern Israel, the West Bank, and part of Jordan. Hence one will find no discussions of sites such as Ebla, Mari, Antioch, Tell el-Amarna, Tell el-Dab`a, Nineveh, Babylon, Ur, or any of the other great sites associated with the lives of the Patriarchs or the travels of Paul.

A comprehensive archaeological encyclopedia for the lands of the Bible is badly needed—one accommodating the region from Mesopotamia, to Egypt, to the West Mediterranean world. The forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Near Eastern Archaeology* and the accompanying *Encyclopedia of New Testament Archaeology*, to be published by the American Schools of Oriental Research and Oxford University Press, will seek to redress this deficiency. For the time being, the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Doubleday, 1992) offers the most comprehensive archaeological discussion of the *number* of sites mentioned in the Bible, but as its purpose was not to serve as a comprehensive archaeological resource, its discussions are usually rather limited.

For the region of Israel and the West Bank, however, Stern's work has no peer and will be difficult to supplant, except as excavations continue and another revision becomes necessary.

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DALE W. MANOR

After the Apostles: Christianity in the Second Century, by WALTER H. WAGNER. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994. pp. xiv + 287. \$16.00 (paper).

Walter Wagner examines the crucial and problematic second century by looking at five essentially theological problems and the responses of five key Christian thinkers—Ignatius, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Irenaeus (his order). Although the author recognizes that Christians "had to fashion some cohesive teachings, practices, and structures" and "to work out patterns for living" (p. 224), his contribution is only to doctrinal history. He offers little information on the church's organization and none on its liturgy, discipline, moral life, or spirituality.

Part 1 gives the setting for the study by dealing with Jewish, Christian, and pagan relationships. It does not really address the problems of the church's self-definition against Judaism, its relations with the state, and the accommodation to philosophy, but it sets some of the background for these issues. The topical analysis lacks chronological distinctions. Part 2 surveys Greco-Roman, Jewish, and NT options on the following questions: "Who created the world and what value does the world have? What is the nature and destiny of humans? Who was Jesus? What roles does the church have? How are Christians and culture related?" Part 3 gives a biographical sketch of each of the five Christian leaders chosen for special treatment followed by a discussion of how each handled the five challenges. One cannot fault the five chosen as important and influential thinkers. The five problems that are the center of the study do not always fit the principal concerns of the five leaders very well; especially is this so for Ignatius.

The classifications and groupings of material give a fresh look at the backgrounds and origins of Christianity. This perspective involves some questionable correlations, for example, on human free will and the nature of the Savior. Different models of presentation in the early writers are often understood as alternatives when they could be seen as different facets of the whole. Sometimes Wagner acknowledges this, but sometimes he makes antitheses (because something seems antithetical to us and/or is in the later doctrinal development) of what were different categories to explain a reality (e.g., the nature of Christ) and not thought-out alternatives. Was the "failure of the parousia" as central a problem as Wagner makes it? He sees it as the precipitating factor for all developments. A small point but significant for someone trying to go beyond his presentation: References to whole books instead of specific passages is not very helpful.

The final chapter on Assessments reveals a striking but little recognized convergence of theological attitude between Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Such an observation is an indication of how this book should stimulate further consideration of important issues in the study of early Christianity.

Abilene Christian University

EVERETT FERGUSON

The Peaceable Kingdom: Essays Favoring Non-Sectarian Christianity, by CARROLL D. OSBURN. Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993. \$10.95.

This collection of essays by the Carmichael Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University should be required reading for anyone interested in current issues facing Churches of Christ. Prof. Osburn has assembled six essays, all of which address some aspect of constructing a

biblical doctrine of fellowship. His plea through all the essays is for rejecting sectarianism in favor of a doctrine of fellowship which, in turn, should be based on a particular type of conservative biblical interpretation. While I wholeheartedly agree with Prof. Osburn's doctrinal goal of a nonsectarian church, I have doubts that his method can do all the work that would be required to reach this goal. I'll say more about this below in dealing in greater depth with his two most important chapters, Chap 1 and Chap 3. Chap 2, "The 'Independents': Eighteenth-Century Scottish Antecedents of American 'Restoration' Thought—Anatomy of a Failure," seeks to debunk the thesis that restoration theology is inherently divisive. Chap 4, "2 John 9 and Christian Fellowship," and Chap 5, "Contend for the Faith (Jude 3)" display Prof. Osburn's formidable exegetical skills as he disassembles traditional sectarian interpretations of these key texts about fellowship. The final chapter, "The Identifying Marks of the Church," is an adaptation of a sermon.

The heart of the book is found in Chap 1, "The Future of Our Religious Past," and in Chap 3, "The Exegetical Matrix of the Quest for the Elusive Non-sectarian Ideal." In these essays Prof. Osburn elaborates on his view of a conservative method of biblical interpretation that avoids the pitfall of either a liberal approach or the regnant fundamentalist interpretation in some parts of the Churches of Christ. He paints a portrait of a changing tradition in which the status of the Bible is ambiguous at best. While he welcomes the change from sectarianism, he is not at all sure that the emerging alternatives will be in any sense biblically grounded. He fears that without a clear sense of interpretive method the Bible will be neglected at worst and misunderstood at best.

In most, if not all, of this analysis he is correct. What is not clear to me is that any single method of biblical interpretation will ever come to wide acceptance within the Churches of Christ. Must we wait on the emergence of such unanimity of method before we can arrive at the kind of nonsectarian ecclesiology Prof. Osburn rightly advocates? Is it possible that we might reach what John Rawls has termed an overlapping consensus on this and many other crucial doctrines?

My specific quibble with the conservative method outlined here is that it chides other methods, liberalism and fundamentalism, for bringing "outside" influences and commitments to the text prior to the act of interpretation. At the same time Prof. Osburn calls for bringing literary and historical controls to the biblical text. These controls, while clear, levelheaded, and venerable in the scholarly tradition, do not arise from the text itself but in the life and mind of the interpreter. All interpreters are historically situated whether they acknowledge it or not. The best any interpreter can do is to be self-conscious about influences.

There are postmodern interpreters of Scripture who are possible conversation partners with the type of biblical exegesis advocated here. I am thinking of the so-called Narrative School, which represents the American children of Barth through H. Richard Niebuhr and Hans Frei. These theologians, while reaping the fruit of much historical scholarship, argue for the necessity of paying careful attention to the narrative structure of much of the Bible. The real test for the nonsectarian doctrine of fellowship so eloquently defended by Prof. Osburn is whether or not it is based on a method of biblical interpretation that is also capable of fellowship with differing methods.

Harvard Divinity School

SHAUN CASEY

Theology Is for Proclamation, by GERHARD O. FORDE. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. 199 pp. \$9.95.

What is theology for, anyway? For Gerhard Forde, a professor of systematic theology at Luther Northwestern Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, there is one answer without remainder: Theology is for proclamation.

Forde begins by defining proclamation as "explicit declaration of the good news, the gospel, the kerygma" (1). Though he uses the term "preaching" almost synonymously in many places, he wants to claim that proclamation is to be understood in a broader sense than preaching. To get more to Forde's argument we must distinguish systematic theology from proclamation.

The critical deed here is the delineation of primary and secondary discourse. Primary discourse is "the Word *from* God." Secondary discourse is "words *about* God." Secondary discourse is reflection on the primary discourse. Proclamation (primary discourse) has no referent; it does not veer into the third person or into past tense. As first-person to second-person discourse in the present tense, it is declarative and demanding of a response, either negatively (further rebellion) or positively (faith). Forde fears that the preaching of the church tends to degenerate into mere secondary discourse. For this to happen the secondary discourse (systematic theology) has lost its *raison d'être* as well. For when systematic theology knows what it is and what it is for, it cannot help moving to proclamation. Systematic theology is nothing other than reflection on yesterday's proclamation with an eye on today's proclamation. Systematic theology informs proclamation so that it can carry out its task better and better, but proclamation signals to systematic theology its critical limits.

The unfolding of Forde's argument can be seen as a sketching of a theology (Chap 1, "The Preached God"); an anthropology (Chap 2, "The Hard of Hearing," and Chap 5, "Hearing"); a christology (Chaps 3 and 4,

"The Preacher and "The Preached God"); and an ecclesiology (Chap 6, "Proclaiming"), all in the service of the primary Word of discourse, proclamation. For each of these classic categories, Forde has a touchpoint in Martin Luther.

For "theology," Forde taps into Luther's dualism of "God preached" vs. "God not preached." God not preached is wrathful, while God preached is salvific. He goes so far as to assert, "Apart from the proclamation God and Satan are virtually indistinguishable" (20). This moves us to Forde's "theological anthropology," which taps into Luther's notion of the bondage of the will. There are things that humans cannot do, will not do, and are not even free to do. "God is free. We are not. . . . That is the basic anthropological presupposition for the proclamation" (47). Proclamation goes through the ear of the human and creates the faith necessary for reconciliation to God.

In "christology" we are faced with both the Jesus who preached and the Jesus preached. Proclamation cannot be confused about its task, however, For proclamation the christological task is not description of Jesus, what Jesus preached, or even how the Jesus who preached came to be the object of the church's preaching, but "*how this Jesus is now to be preached*" (60). Proclamation makes unavoidable this critical question for the hearer: "Who do you say that I am?" Thus christology has essentially the same task as theology: It "is reflection on the Jesus who has been proclaimed to us in the church so that we will return once again to the proclamation. . . . Christological reflection is to guide us on our way from yesterday's to today's proclamation" (87). In the proclamation of Jesus God is thus repeated to us anew, and in this repetition God is "done to us" in such a way that response is demanded.

The church ("ecclesiology") thus fulfills its reason for being by embodying proclamation in both word (preaching as proclamation) and deed (sacraments as proclamation). The church is the community that *does* the deed of the gospel, first of all, thus allowing for the dead to be raised to life. In the proclamation through preaching and sacraments the church is the church (fulfilling the Augsburg confession's statement about the presence of the church) of Christ. Such proclamatory ministry saves the church from degenerating into an information-dispensing entity, a social club, or an activist group.

Forde's writing is vigorous as he pulls no punches and makes no apologies for his hyper-Lutheranism. Yet, such hyper-Lutheranism causes him to strain Pauline theology at least, if not NT theology. For Paul does not seem to lose his critical tension when discussing the activity of God and humanity. Though staunch freewill advocates would certainly agree with much that Forde says about the impossibility of human beings generating their own salvation, there is a tensive struggle in Paul to describe this

relationship, an unrelieved tensiveness that the apostle allows to stand paradoxically and dialectically raw in his letters.

The Lutheran proclivity toward relieving this tension and removing the dialectic has tragic consequences for theology and proclamation, which necessitates the retention of the thoroughly strained doctrine of the "bondage of the will," a doctrine which cannot stand up to the scrutiny of a biblically literate microscope. Forde could be served by Barth's discussion of the role of primary and secondary theological reflection (see *Church Dogmatics* I.1, pp. 47ff.). And, finally, there is an optimism about Forde's understanding of proclamation which does not adequately account for the rejection of the Word in the world. Early in the book Forde gives a wink to the idea that proclamation evokes a response either positively or negatively in the hearer, but the argument soon shifts to a very optimistic notion of the Word's response of faith. There is the impact suggestion in his dropping of any discussion of the rebellious response that faithful proclamation will not really fail too often (cf. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, Chap XV).

In conclusion, let me strongly affirm that this is a stimulating work. There are no stagnant places in *Theology Is for Proclamation*. I applaud Forde as a professor of systematics venturing "across the lines" into homiletics. If one has an interest in either homiletics or systematics, this book should be read. Even if some readers have Lutheran allergies, they cannot help being stimulated here.

Abilene Christian University

ANDRÉ RESNER

The Pastoral Epistles, by GEORGE W. KNIGHT III. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992. xxxiv + 514 pp. 3 indices. \$39.99.

"We still await a really satisfying treatment of the pastorals." At least that's how Ralph P. Martin summed up his discussion of the relatively meager selection of commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus that were available a decade ago (*New Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984], 84). Now comes *The Pastoral Epistles* by George W. Knight III, who teaches at Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This addition to *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, edited by I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque, goes a long way toward correcting the problem.

It comes as no surprise that the question of authorship dominates the 50-page introduction. Knight, acknowledging the help of Donald Guthrie, fends off arguments against Pauline authorship and upholds the traditional position. Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus during the time between his two Roman imprisonments (i.e., during the early-to-mid-60s). He wrote 2 Timothy during the second Roman imprisonment (as early as 64 and as late as 67). He was

martyred in Rome some time around 64-67. In defending this reconstruction, the author deals with the alleged and real differences in vocabulary, style, ecclesiology, and theology between the Pastorals and the other letters ascribed to Paul.

In dealing with the revived suggestion that Luke wrote these letters, Knight accepts no more than the possibility that Luke served as Paul's amanuensis.

In the commentary proper, Knight briefly introduces each section and then seriously engages the Greek text verse by verse, treating phrases and individual words. He discusses significant textual questions, carries on a conversation with the immediate and broader biblical contexts, and responds to both ancient and modern secondary literature. Instead of asserting a determined position, Knight discusses every exegetical alternative with thoroughness. For example, more than a page is used in discussing whether *kyrios* in 1 Tim 1:14 refers to the Father or to the Son.

In two excursuses Knight crosses the line dividing exegesis from hermeneutics. In the first, "Bishops/Presbyters and Deacons," the author builds a strong case that churches of the NT era universally recognized the two classes of leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Phil. 1:1). Indeed, a plurality of bishops and deacons serving a congregation is the NT "pattern." In the second excursus, "Motivations for Appropriate Conduct," Knight argues that in Tit 2:1-10 Paul insisted upon such standards not merely because their violation would be offensive to outsiders and thus hurtful to the reputation of the gospel, but also because those standards square with sound teaching, are intrinsically right, and were recognized by many first-century Cretans as such. In taking this stance Knight rejects the view that some of the regulations (notably, the wife's submission to her husband) are purely cultural and should not be bound in more egalitarian societies. He also rejects the notion that the high ethical standards of Pauline Christianity and the culturally accepted norms of the Pastorals do not agree. Citing the ideal of citizenship in Rom 13 and the popular ethics embraced in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the author denies that a tension exists between the "real Paul" and the Pastorals. Furthermore, the Pastorals do not uniquely represent an "early catholicism" that upheld a sort of pedestrian, middle-class morality.

Readers will find in Knight's work a number of likes and dislikes. The reviewer sees the best aspect of this commentary as its exegetical detail on the Greek text. Knight also does a better job of drawing the reader into the text than do Dibelius and Conzelmann, though their work remains a gold mine of historical and literary parallels.

The primary flaw of Knight's commentary is that its linguistic focus is so intense that other contours of the text are frequently ignored. For example, on 1 Tim 5:23 ("No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for

the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments”) Knight says nothing of wine drinking in the Greco-Roman world nor does he respond to the common suggestion that this verse provides a glimpse of how the ascetic demands of the false teachers were affecting timid Timothy. Though shorter commentaries might ignore such points, one expects a lengthy work (even grammatically oriented) to treat them. A second criticism is that the historical notes that Knight provides, as well as the reported positions of other scholars sometimes lack accuracy.

In spite of the criticisms, Professor Knight is to be congratulated for his significant contribution to NT study. An excellent supplement and balance to the Dibelius-Conzelmann commentary, Knight's *Pastoral Epistles* will well serve teachers of other students of the Greek text. And for preachers whose Greek is serviceable, Knight's commentary is arguably the one to turn to first after working through the text itself.

Wallingford, CT

FRANK BELLIZZI

BOOK NOTES

Prologue to History. The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis, by JOHN VAN SETERS. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press. 1992. xiii + 367 pp.

In *Prologue to History*, John Van Seters continues his incisive analysis of the material within the Pentateuchal materials (see his earlier *Abraham in History and Tradition*). His analysis and assessment of the Yahwist are striking. The Yahwist is an ancient historian, writing in a manner and style akin to ancient Greco-Roman historiography. For Van Seters, a primary shortcoming of earlier form-critical analyses of Genesis was the failure to assess the form of the work as a whole. Viewing the material as a whole, he concludes that the Yahwist (which encompasses all the pre-Priestly material of the Pentateuch) attempts to present an account of Israel's origins in a "vulgate" tradition similar to other works of ancient historiography. The Primeval materials function as an *archaiologia* (prologue) which account for the origins of Israel and her neighbors. These primeval traditions are significantly modified by the Yahwist through a genealogical framework and a theological framework of sin and judgment (crime and punishment). This genealogical framework also provides the linkage for the primeval materials and the patriarchal narratives. The multiple promises of land and nationhood effectively integrate the traditions of Abraham and Jacob. It is The Yahwist who effectively transfers the promise theme to the patriarchs, thus making

them the "prologue" to the exodus-conquest tradition and incorporating the patriarchs into the national identity.

Through close source-critical, form-critical, and comparative work, Van Seters attempts to demonstrate that the Yahwist is clearly the product of the exile, a product familiar with neighboring eastern (Mesopotamian) and western (Greek) antiquarian traditions, and one that compiled and molded Israelite materials into a comprehensive prologue for the DtrH. If the DtrH represents a nationalistic, prophetic view of Israelite history and the exile, the Yahwist presents a view more akin to the broader universalistic concerns of Second Isaiah.

I have called the Yahwist's work in Genesis a 'prologue to history.' In ancient historiography, the 'prologue' or *archaiologia* set forth the ancient background for the historical work, and in doing so it often laid down the principles by which the history was to be understood. By his presentation of the origins of humanity and that of the people's ancestry, the Yahwist has given a radical revision and reinterpretation of the national tradition (332-3).

This work of Van Seters, like its predecessors, will surely generate lively debate among the scholarly community.

Pepperdine University

RICK R. MARRS

Josephus and Faith: Πίστις and Πιστεύειν as Faith Terminology in the Writings of Flavius Josephus and in the New Testament. DENNIS R. LINDSAY. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993. 212 pp.

In this English version of his dissertation, completed in Tubingen in 1990 under the direction of Otto Betz, Lindsay explores an area that has been largely ignored: the relationship between Josephus and the NT on the concept of faith. The significance of this study, however, extends beyond a comparison between Josephus and the NT on this concept. The larger issue of this book is the relationship between the NT and Hellenism.

In response to the widespread claim that the concept of faith in the NT reflects a major departure from the OT's understanding, Lindsay offers a detailed comparison of the use of πίστις and its cognates in secular Greek, the LXX, Philo, Jesus Ben Sirach, Josephus, and the NT. In response to M. Buber's claim that Christianity and Judaism represent two types of faith, Lindsay demonstrates that, while the NT usage is not identical with that of the OT, it reflects a logical development from the OT and not from Hellenistic usage. The major development in the NT is the frequency with which this language is used. The language of Josephus is far more Hellenized than that of the NT.

Abilene Christian University

JAMES W. THOMPSON

Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue, by SAMUEL E. BALENTINE, in *Overtures to Biblical Theology*. Edited by Walter Brueggemann et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993. xvi. + 311 pp. \$14.00 (paper).

This is an important book for understanding the nature of prayer. Its eleven chapters deal with four topics. Chaps 1-3 discuss prayer and the interpreter, the proper method for approaching this subject, and God's relatedness to humanity and to the world as the foundation of prayer.

Chaps 4-8 treat types of prayer: prayer and the depiction of character; prayer and the characterization of God, including prayers for divine intervention and prayers of penitence; prayers for divine justice; laments; and praise.

Chaps 9 and 10 probe theological aspects of praying, especially its dialogical nature, and prayer's portraits of God and humanity. The concluding chapter contains a challenge to the church to pray responsibly in order to keep the community and the world in God and God in the community and the world.

Abilene Christian University

JOHN T. WILLIS

Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity, by JAMES S. JEFFERS. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. 215 pp. (paper).

Using sociological analysis of archaeological and literary evidence, Jeffers accounts for the hierarchical evolution of early Christianity in Rome: Roman Christianity co-opted the ideology of the ruling classes. How Roman concepts of hierarchy made their way into churches can be seen by comparing 1 Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas. While Hermas is decidedly sectarian in its rejection of Roman society, 1 Clement borrowed Roman ideology in its pursuit of organizational unity. Higher status Roman Christians softened the polemic against the wealthy and powerful and between church and society. Eventually the thinking reflected in 1 Clement won out over that in Hermas. Thus charismatic organization gave way to a more routinized order in which "social betters" were viewed as spiritual superiors.

Jeffers makes a compelling case though he exaggerates the differences between Hermas and 1 Clement. The book is essential for libraries and is recommended as an advanced undergraduate or graduate text.

Hanover, NH

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